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The Night Watch, by Rembrandt. — Page 58.

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THE WORKS OF

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

VOLUME FOURTEEN

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY
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TRAVELS IN RUSSIA

PART TWO

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TRAVELS IN RUSSIA

THE KREMLIN

WITH us, people are apt to imagine that the Kremlin is blackened by time, and has the dark, smoky tone of our old buildings, which contributes to their beauty by making it venerable. We carry this notion so far as to wash the new parts of buildings with soot mixed with water, in order to give them a patina that shall destroy the crude whiteness of the stone and harmonise it with the older portions. One needs to have attained a very high degree of civilisation to understand this feeling, to prize the traces which the passage of centuries have left upon the epiderm of temples, palaces, and fortresses. Like people who are still young and artless, the Russians are fond of what is new or looks as if it were new; and they believe they prove their respect for a monument by renewing its coat of paint as soon as it begins to scale or fall away. They are the greatest whitewashers in the

world. Even the old frescoes in the Byzantine taste, which adorn the interior of the churches, and very often the exterior, are re-painted when the colours seem to be fading, so that these paintings, so solemnly antique in appearance, and so primitively barbaric, have sometimes been renovated but a few days before. It is not a rare sight to behold a dauber perched on a frame scaffolding, touching up a Madonna with as much coolness as if he were a monk of Mt. Athos, and filling with fresh colours the austere contour which is itself but an unchangeable pattern. So one must be extremely prudent in appreciating these paintings, which once were old, if I may thus put it, but which are now wholly modern, in spite of their hieratic stiffness and quaintness.

This little preamble has no other object than to prepare the reader for the white and coloured aspect of the Kremlin, instead of the sombre, melancholy, and grim look which his Western notions had led him to expect.

Formerly the Kremlin, at all times considered the Acropolis, the holy place, the palladium, and the very heart of Russia, — was surrounded by a palisade of heavy oaken logs. The citadel of Athens was not otherwise defended before the first invasion of the

Persians. Dimitri Donskoï replaced the palisade by crenelated walls, which, on account of their state of decay and ruin, were rebuilt by Czar Ivan III. It is Ivan III's wall which still subsists to-day, but which has been frequently restored and rebuilt in more than one portion. Besides, thick layers of whitewash prevent one perceiving the wounds made by time, and the black traces of the fire of 1812, which, for the matter of that, merely licked the outer walls with its fiery tongues. The Kremlin somewhat resembles the Alhambra: like the Moorish fortress it stands on the plateau of a hill; enclosed within its walls, flanked by towers, it contains royal dwellings, churches, squares, and among the older buildings a modern palace, which fits in as unpleasantly as the palace of Charles V. in the delicate Arab architecture which it crushes with its weight. The tower of Ivan Veliki, is not unlike the Vela tower, and from the Kremlin, as from the Alhambra, one has a wonderful prospect, — a panorama the dazzling beauty of which remains forever in the mind. But I must not carry this parallel farther, lest I should exaggerate it.

Strange to say, the Kremlin, seen from outside, is rather more Eastern-looking than the Alhambra itself,

with its massive, reddish towers, the inward magnificence of which nothing suggests. Above the wall, with its scalloped crenelations, between the towers with richly wrought roofs, myriads of domes, bulbous belfries, with metallic reflections and sudden flashes of light, seem to ascend and descend, like brilliant golden bubbles; the wall, glistering like a silver basket, encloses this bouquet of gilded flowers, and it is as if one really saw one of those fairy sites such as the imagination of Arab story-tellers builds so lavishly, — an architectural crystallisation of the Thousand and One Nights. And when Winter dusts with its diamond-like mica these edifices as strange as dreams, one could really believe one's self transported into another planet, for on nothing like this has the glance ever fallen.

I entered the Kremlin by the Spasskiia or Saviour's Gate, which opens on the Krasnaïa; it is cut in a huge square tower, in front of a sort of porch; the tower itself has three stories, diminishing in size, and is topped by a spire resting upon arcades. A double-headed eagle, holding in its talons the orb of the world, surmounts the sharp point of the spire, which is octagonal, like the story immediately below, and ribbed and gilded on the sides. Each face of the second story

contains a huge dial, so that the tower tells the time to every point of the compass. Add, by way of effect, to the projections of the building a few touches of snow, put on like high lights in body-colour, and you will have a faint idea of the aspect of that superb tower which springs in three jets above the denticulated wall in which it forms a break.

The Spasskiia Gate is the object of such veneration in Russia, on account of a miraculous image or legend, concerning which I could not obtain accurate information, that no one passes under it with covered head, not even the Czar himself; a failure in this respect is considered an act of sacrilege, and might prove perilous; foreigners are therefore informed of the custom. It is not simply a question of bowing to the holy images on the entrance of the porch, before which burn everlasting lamps, but one has to remain bareheaded until one has passed through altogether. Now, it is not a pleasant thing to have to hold your fur cap in your hand when the cold is ten below zero, and this in a long passage through which blows an icy blast; but every one must conform to the usages of nations, and take off one's cap under the Spasskiia Gate, or one's boots on the threshold of the Souleïman

Mosque, or St. Sophia's. A true traveller never objects, even if he were to catch the worst possible cold in the head.

After passing through this gate one enters upon the esplanade of the Kremlin, amid the most splendid medley of palaces, churches, and convents which it is possible to imagine. They have no relation to any known style; they are neither Greek nor Byzantine, nor Gothic, Arab, or Chinese; they are Russian and Muscovite. Never has a freer, more original architecture, one more careless of rules, more Romanticist, in a word, realised its caprices with such fancifulness. The surfaces occasionally look like chance crystallisations. However, this style, which seems to obey no law, is easily recognised at a glance by its characteristic domes and golden bulbous steeples.

Below this esplanade, on which the principal buildings of the Kremlin are grouped, and which forms the plateau of the hill, winds, following the changes of the ground, the rampart with its warders' walk, flanked with towers of infinite variety, some round, some square, others slender as minarets, others massive as bastions, with collarettes of battlements, stories set back, gambrel roofs, open galleries, lanterns, spires,

scale-work, rib-work, every possible manner of roofing a tower. The crenelations cut deep into the wall; their tops in the shape of the barbed head of an arrow, are alternately filled up or pierced by a barbican. I am not a judge of the value of such a defence from a strategic point of view, but from that of poetry it fully satisfies the imagination, and gives the impression of a formidable citadel.

Between the rampart and the terre-plein, which is bordered by a balustrade, extend gardens, at present covered with snow, and rises a picturesque little church with bulbous steeples. Beyond, as far as the eye can reach, stretches the vast and wondrous panorama of Moscow; the saw-like crest of the wall forms an admirable foreground, and throws back the vistas of the horizon in a way that no art could improve upon.

The Moskva, about as broad and as sinuous as the Seine, encloses the whole of this side of the Kremlin, and from the esplanade looked like a frozen abyss of opaque glass, for the snow had been swept from the spot I was looking at, to make a track for trotters being trained for sleigh races on the ice.

The revetment of the quay, which is bordered by splendid modern hotels and mansions, forms a sub-

structure of firm lines for the vast sea of houses, the roofs of which extend beyond it into the infinite, and are set off by the perspective and the height of the point of view.

A fine hard frost, — words that would make Méry shiver with horror, for that chilly poet pretends that every frost is hideous, — a fine hard frost having cleared the sky of its great uniform tint of yellowish gray, drawn the night before like a curtain over the darkened horizon, the circular canvas of the panorama was of a fairly bright azure, and the increased cold, which crystallised the snow, made the brilliancy of the latter greater still. A pale sunbeam, such as shines in the month of January in Moscow, on these short winter days which recall the nearness of the Pole, falling obliquely on the city, spread out fan-wise around the Kremlin, touched the snow-covered roofs, and here and there made them sparkle. Above the white roofs, which looked like the foam flecks of a petrified tempest, uprose, like ships stranded on reefs, the higher masses of the public buildings, of the churches and the convents. It is said that Moscow contains more than three hundred churches and convents; I do not know whether the figures are exact or merely hyperbolical,

but they sound probable when one looks at the city from the top of the Kremlin, which itself contains many cathedrals and religious edifices.

It is impossible to imagine anything more beautiful, richer, more splendid and more fairy-like than the domes surmounted by Greek crosses, the bulbous belfries, the hexagonal or octagonal spires, with moulded ribs and tracery which swell out or flash up over the motionless tumult of the snow-covered roofs; the gilded cupolas have reflections of marvellous transparency, and the light is concentrated on their salient points in the form of a star shining like a lamp. Some of the churches with silver or tin domes, seem to be roofed with moons. Farther on are helms of azure, constellated with gold; caps made of plates of beaten copper, imbricated like dragons' scales; or else overset onions, painted green and glazed with a thin, shining veneer of snow; then, as the distance grows greater, the details vanish, even when a glass is used, and nothing can be seen but the brilliant mass of domes, spires, towers, campaniles, of every imaginable shape, their outlines showing dark against the bluish tint of the distance, and their projections standing out, thanks to a spangle of gold, silver, copper, sapphire, or emerald. To com-

plete the picture imagine, over the cold, bluish tints of the snow, a few long and gentle gleams of faint purple, the pale roses of a Polar sunset strewn over the ermine carpet of a Russian winter.

No city gives such an impression of absolute novelty; not even Venice, for which Canaletto, Guardi, Bonington, Joyant, Wild, Ziem, and photographs prepare one long beforehand. Hitherto Moscow has not been much visited by artists, and its quaint aspects have rarely been reproduced; the severe Northern climate adds to the peculiarity of the picture by the effects of snow, the strange colour of the heavens, the quality of the light, which is not the same as with us and requires of Russian painters a special scale of colour, the truthfulness of which it is difficult to understand when one has not visited the country. On the esplanade of the Kremlin, with the panorama of Moscow stretched out before one, one really feels in a foreign country, and a Frenchman, the most in love with Paris, does not regret the gutter of the Rue du Bac.

The Kremlin contains within its walls a great number of churches, or cathedrals as the Russians call them; so the Acropolis, on its narrow plateau, held a great number of temples. I shall visit them one after

another, but I shall first stop at the tower of Ivan Veliky, — a huge, octagonal belfry, with three stories, each narrower than the lower one, and the last of which, above the zone of ornaments, assumes the form of a round turret and ends in a swelling cupola, gilded with ducat gold and surmounted with a Greek cross set upon a crescent. At each story an arcade cut out on the side of the tower allows the bronze bells to be seen. There are thirty-three of them; one is said to be the famous alarm-bell of Novgorod, the sound of which summoned the people to tumultuous deliberations on the public square. One of these bells weighs over sixty-five tons, and the great bell of Notre-Dame, of which Quasimodo was so proud, would by the side of this monstrous mass of metal look like a mere hand-bell used in the service of the mass.

It seems that the Russians are passionately fond of colossal bells, for close to the tower of Ivan Veliky the amazed tourist perceives on a granite base a bell so enormous it might be taken for a bronze tent, especially as a broad fissure forms in the side a sort of door, which a man could easily enter without bending his head. It was cast by order of the Empress Anne, and two hundred tons of metal were used in the casting.

It was de Montferrand, the French architect of St. Isaac's, who hauled it up, and drew it out of the ground in which it was half buried, either through the violence of its fall while it was being hoisted, or in consequence of a fire or a break-down. Can such a mass ever have been swung? Did the iron clapper ever send out a sonorous tempest from that mysterious capsule? History and legend are mute on this point. Perhaps, like some of the ancient peoples who left in their abandoned camps beds twelve cubits long, to make those who came after believe they belonged to a race of giants, the Russians may have wished by casting this bell, out of all proportions to human uses to give to distant posterity a gigantic idea of themselves, if after the lapse of many centuries the bell were found in the course of excavations. However it may be, it is beautiful, like all things which surpass ordinary dimensions. The gracefulness of enormity, a mysterious and grim but real gracefulness, is not lacking. The sides are formed of ample and powerful curves, circled by delicate ornamentation; it is surmounted by a globe with a cross upon it; its clear-cut outlines and the patina of the metal please the eye; while the fissure itself opens like the mouth of a bronze cavern, myste-

rious and sombre. At the foot of the pedestal is placed, like the detached knocker of a gate, a fragment of metal which was broken out of the bell.

But I have talked enough about bells. Let us enter one of the most ancient and most characteristic cathedrals of the Kremlin, the first one to be built in stone, the Cathedral Ouspensky, or Cathedral of the Assumption. It is true that this is not the original building founded by Ivan Kalita, which fell after a century and a half of existence, and was rebuilt by Ivan III, so that the existing cathedral does not go back farther than the fifteenth century, in spite of its Byzantine air and its archaic aspect. One is surprised to learn that it is the work of Fioraventi, the Bolognese architect, whom the Russians call Aristoteles, perhaps on account of his great learning. One would naturally suppose that it was a Greek architect who had been called from Constantinople, his head still filled with St. Sophia's and the types of Greek oriental architecture. The Assumption is almost a square, and its great walls rise up with surprising and superb upward rush. Four enormous pillars, as big as towers and as mighty as the pilasters of the palace at Karnak, support the central dome, which is placed upon a flat

roof, in the Asiatic style, and flanked by four smaller cupolas. This simple arrangement produces a grandiose effect, and the massive pillars give, without seeming heavy, a firm base and an extraordinary stability to the mass of the cathedral.

The whole interior of the church is covered with paintings in Byzantine style, upon gold backgrounds; the pillars themselves are covered with figures painted in zones as on the columns of Egyptian temples and palaces. Curious indeed is this form of decoration, in which you are surrounded by thousands of figures as by a mute multitude, ascending and descending the walls, walking in files in Christian processions, isolating themselves in attitudes of hieratic stiffness, following the curve of the pendentives, of the vaulting, of the cupolas, and clothing the temple with a human tapestry, swarming motionless and troublous. The mysterious effect is increased by the paucity of light, which is skilfully managed. The great grim saints of the Greek calendar, assume in their tawny, ruddy shadows, a formidable life-like look; they gaze upon you with their fixed eyes, and seem to threaten you with their hands outstretched in blessing. The militant archangels, the holy knights with elegant and bold mien,

mingle their brilliant armour with the dark robes of the old monks and anachorets. They have the pride of port, the trace of antique outlines which mark the figures of Panselinos, the Byzantine painter, master of the monk of Aghia Lavra. The interior of St. Mark's at Venice, which looks like a gilded grotto, gives an idea of the Cathedral of the Assumption; only, the nave of the Muscovite church springs heavenwards, while the vaulting of St. Mark's mysteriously presses down like a crypt.

The Ikonostas, a high gilded wall of five stories of figures, looks like the façade of a golden palace, and dazzles the eye with its fabulous magnificence. Through the chasing of the goldsmith-work the Mother of God and the saints pass their brown heads and hands; their aureoles in relief, catching the light make the facets of their incrusted gems sparkle in the sunbeams, and flame like genuine haloes; upon the images, which are the objects of peculiar veneration, are hung pectorals of precious stones, necklaces, bracelets, constellated with diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, amethysts, and turquoises. The craze of religious luxury could not possibly be carried farther. What beautiful decorative motives are these Ikono-

stases, veils of gilded gems, stretched between the faith of the faithful and the mysteries of the Holy Sacrifice. It must be acknowledged that the Russians have admirably turned them to account, and that as regards magnificence the Greek religion is in no wise inferior to the Catholic, even though it does not equal it in the domain of pure art.

There is preserved in the Cathedral of the Assumption, in a casket of priceless value, the tunic of our Lord. Two other reliquaries, blazing with gems, contain a piece of the Virgin's dress and a nail from the True Cross. The Vladimir Virgin painted by the hand of St. Luke — the image of which the Russians look upon as a palladium, and the exhibition of which caused the fierce hordes of Timour to retreat — is adorned with a single diamond, estimated to be worth more than one hundred thousand francs. The mass of goldsmith-work in which it is set has no doubt cost twice or thrice as much. This form of luxury would strike a man of delicate taste, more attracted by beauty than wealth, as somewhat barbaric, but it cannot be denied that the mass of gold, diamonds, and pearls does actually produce a religious and superb effect. These Virgins, whose jewel-cases are better filled than those of queens

and empresses, impress artless piety; they shine in the shadows, in the faint light of the lamps, with supernatural beams, and their diamond crowns scintillate like starry coronets.

From the centre of the vaulting hangs an immense, massive, silver lustre, beautifully worked, of circular shape, which replaces the former lustre, of great weight, carried away during the French invasion; forty-six branches are fitted to it.

It is in the Cathedral of the Assumption that the Emperors are crowned; the platform reserved for the sovereign stands between four pillars which support the cupola, and is placed opposite the Ikonostas. The tombs of the Metropolitans of Moscow are against the side walls; they are of oblong form; in the penumbra in which they are enveloped, they resemble trunks ready packed for the great voyage of Eternity.

The Arkhanghelsky, or Archangel Cathedral, the façade of which is turned obliquely towards the Ouspensky Cathedral, distant a few steps only, — is not essentially different in plan; it has the same system of bulbous domes, massive pillars, Ikonostases brilliant with gold, Byzantine paintings covering the interior of the edifice like sacred tapestry. Only in this church

the paintings are not upon gilded backgrounds, and resemble frescoes more than mosaics. They represent scenes of the Last Judgment, and the haughty, grim-faced portraits of the old Russian Czars.

Here are the tombs of these Czars covered with cashmeres and rich stuffs like the turbehs of the Sultans in Constantinople; they are sober, simple, and severe; Death is not made pretty, with the delicate efflorescence of Gothic art, which has found in mortuary sculpture its happiest themes for ornamentation; there are no kneeling angels, no theological virtues, no emblematical weeping figures, no saints in traceried niches, no fantastic lambrequins wreathed around coats of arms, no knights in armour, their heads resting on a marble cushion and their feet upon a sleeping lion; — nothing but the body within its funereal box, covered over with the mortuary pall. No doubt it is a loss for art, but a gain for religious impression.

In the Cathedral Blagoviestchensky, or Cathedral of the Annunciation, at the back of the Czar's palace, is shown a very curious and very rare painting, which represents the Angel Gabriel appearing to the Blessed Virgin, to announce to her that she is to be the Mother

of the Son of God; the interview, like that of Jesus and the woman of Samaria, takes place near a well. According to the tradition of the Greek church, it was later, after her humble acquiescence in the will of the Lord, that the Blessed Virgin was visited in her chamber by the Holy Ghost. This scene, painted on the tower wall of the church, is protected against the weather by a sort of awning. A single fact suffices to give an idea of the internal splendour of the church: the pavement is formed of agates brought from Greece.

Near the New or Great Palace, and close to these churches, is a strange building in no known style of architecture, Asiatic and Tartaric in appearance, which is among the lay buildings what Vassily Blajenny is to the religious buildings, — a fully realised fancy of sumptuous, barbaric, and fantastic imagination. It was built under Ivan III, by the architect Aleviso. On its roof spring in graceful and picturesque irregularity the gold-topped turrets of the chapels and oratories it contains. An outer staircase, from the top of which the Emperor shows himself to the people after his coronation, leads up to it, its ornamental projection forming an original architectural feature. It is as well known in Moscow

as the Giants' Staircase in Venice; it is one of the curiosities of the Kremlin, and is called in Russian Krasnoe Kriltso, or the Red Staircase.

The interior of the palace, the residence of the ancient Czars, is almost indescribable; the rooms and passages seem to have been cut out one after another, without following a settled plan, from some huge block of stone, so curious, complicated, and bewildering is the maze they form; the level and the direction changing in accordance with the caprices of a crazy fancy. One walks through it as in a dream, sometimes stopped by a grated gate that opens mysteriously, sometimes forced to pass along a narrow, dark passage, the walls of which one almost brushes on either side; or again, there is no other way than the dentellated edge of the cornice, from which one sees the copper plates of the roof and the bulbs of the belfries; ascending, descending, utterly bewildered, seeing here and there through golden gratings the gleam of lamps flashing upon the gilded Ikonostas, and reaching after this long trip in the interior, a hall amazingly ornamented with barbaric richness, at the end of which one is surprised not to see the great Khan of Tartary seated cross-legged upon his black felt carpet.

Such is for instance the hall called the Golden Chamber, which occupies the whole interior of the Granovitaia Palata, or Facetted Palace, thus called no doubt on account of the facetting in diamond form of the stones of the façade. The gilded vaulted ceiling of this hall is supported by elliptical arches resting upon a central pillar; thick, gilded iron bars bind the arches one to another, and prevent their spreading. A few paintings here and there form dark spots against the ruddy splendour of the background. On the mouldings and arches run inscriptions in old Slavic letters, magnificent characters which lend themselves as readily to the ornamentation of buildings as does Cufic. It is not possible to imagine a richer, more mysterious, more sombre and yet more brilliant decoration, than that of the Golden Chamber: a Shakespearean Romanticist would love to make of it a setting for the last scene of a drama.

Some of the vaulted halls of the Old Palace are so low that a man of medium height can scarcely manage to stand upright in them. It was there that in an atmosphere overheated by the stoves, the women, squatting in Eastern fashion upon piles of carpets, spent the long hours of the Russian winter, watching,

through the narrow windows, the snow sparkling upon the gilded cupolas and the crows sweeping in vast spirals around the steeples.

These apartments, covered with paintings, the palm leaves, designs, and flowers of which resemble the patterns of Cashmere shawls, make one think of Asiatic harems transported into Northern climes; the real Muscovite taste, spoiled later on by unintelligent imitation of Western arts, here appears in all its primitive originality, and with all its strongly barbaric flavour. I have often noticed that the progress of civilisation seems to deprive nations of the feeling for architecture and ornament; the old buildings of the Kremlin prove once again how true is this assertion, which may at first appear paradoxical. The decoration of these mysterious chambers has been directed by an inexhaustible fancy; gold, green, blue, red mingle with wondrous success and produce charming effects. This architecture, utterly careless of symmetrical combinations, rises like a mass of soap-bubbles which a child blows in a plate through a straw. Each cell joins the next one, turning to account its angles and its facets, and the whole mass is brilliant with the varied colours of the iris. This apparently puerile and eccentric com-

parison, nevertheless renders better than any other the way in which these fantastic though real palaces are clustered together.

I wish the New or Great Palace had been built in this style. It is an immense building in modern taste, which would be beautiful anywhere else, but which is out of place in the centre of the old Kremlin. Classical architecture, with its great cold lines, seems still more wearily solemn amid these strangely shaped, brightly coloured palaces, and the multitude of Eastern-looking churches that raise to heaven a gilded forest of cupolas, domes, pyramidions and bulbous steeples. On beholding this Muscovite architecture, one might readily believe one's self in some fanciful city of Asia; the cathedrals might be mosques, and the steeples minarets, but the sedate façade of the New Palace brings one back to the West and to civilisation, a painful thing to a Romanticist barbarian like myself.

The palace is entered by a monumental staircase closed at its upper part by magnificent gates of polished iron, which are opened to give passage to the visitors. Then one enters under the high vaulting of the domed hall, in which are placed sentries that are never relieved; they are four manikins, dressed from top to toe in

curious, antique Slavonic armour. These knights have a splendid port. They are so life-like that the mistake is easily pardoned; one might easily imagine that their hearts are beating under their coats of mail. Mediæval armours thus placed upright almost make me shiver involuntarily, so faithfully do they preserve the outer form of man, which has vanished forever.

From this rotunda start two galleries containing inestimable riches. The treasury of Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, the wells of Abul-Kassim, the Grüne-Gewälbe at Dresden, would not together present such a multitude of marvels, the material value of which is enhanced by their historical worth. Here sparkle, shine, and cast prismatic flashes and capricious gleams, diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, all the precious gems which miserly Nature conceals within her mines, and which are here lavished as if they were mere glass. They constellate crowns, they light up the ends of sceptres, they roll in sparkling rain upon the insignia of empire, they form arabesques and monograms, under which one can hardly perceive the golden setting. The eye is dazzled and the mind scarce ventures to calculate the sums of money represented by these splendours. It would be folly to attempt to describe this mighty jewel-casket, —

a whole volume would be insufficient. I must be satisfied with mentioning some of the most remarkable objects. One of the most ancient crowns is that of Vladimir Monomachus; it was the gift of Emperor Alexis Comnenius, and was brought from Constantinople to Kiev by a Greek Embassy, in 1116. Apart from its historical associations, it is a piece of work in exquisite taste. On a ground of gold filigree are incrusted pearls and precious stones, arranged with a wonderful knowledge of ornamentation. The crowns of Kazan and Astrakhan, in Oriental taste, the one covered with turquoises, the other surmounted by a huge, uncut emerald, are jewels which would drive modern goldsmiths to despair. The crown of Siberia is of gold cloth, and, like all the others, bears on top the Greek cross; and like all the others is starred with diamonds, sapphires, and pearls. The golden sceptre of Vladimir Monomachus, nearly one metre in length, contains no less than two hundred and sixty-eight diamonds, three hundred and sixty rubies, and fifteen emeralds. The enamels which cover the places left free by the gems represent devotional subjects treated in Byzantine style. This sceptre and a reliquary in the form of a cross, which contains a fragment of the

stone of our Lord's tomb and a piece of the True Cross are also presents from Emperor Alexis Comnenius. This treasure is enclosed in a golden casket, fairly covered with gems. A curious gem is the chain of the first of the Romanoffs, on each link of which is engraved a prayer and one of the Czar's titles; there are ninety-nine links. I cannot speak of all the thrones, orbs, sceptres, and crowns of the different reigns, but I may say that if the richness is ever the same, the purity of taste and the beauty of workmanship diminish in proportion as one draws closer to modern times.

A no less marvellous thing, but more easily described, is the hall containing the gold and silver plate. Around the pillars rise circular credences in the form of dressers, which support a whole world of vases, pots, ewers, flagons, beer glasses, tankards, bowls, jugs, ladles, pipkins, cups, mugs, cans, pottles, goblets, beakers, pints, stoups, gourds, amphoræ, and whatever relates to lush, as Rabelais used to say in his Pantagruelic tongue. Behind these shine vessels of gold and silver-gilt, as large as those in which Victor Hugo's Burgraves had whole oxen served up. Every pot has its own nimbus, and what pots they are!

Some are no less than three or four feet in height, and could be lifted by a Titan only. Imagine the expenditure of imagination in this variety of plate! Every shape capable of containing drink, wine, hydromel, beer, kwass, brandy, seem to have been made use of. The ornamentation of these gold and silver or silver-gilt vases is in the richest, most fantastic and most grotesque taste; sometimes bacchanals with chubby, jolly figures dancing around the paunch of a pot; sometimes foliage with animals and hunts; sometimes dragons writhing around the handles, or antique medals set within the sides of a beaker; a Roman triumph passing by with its trumpets and ensigns; Hebrews in Dutch costume carrying the grapes from the Promised Land; a mythological feminine nude figure, contemplated by satyrs through dense arabesques. According to the artist's fancy the vases assume bestial forms, take the shape of heavy bears, or slender storks, or winged eagles, or ducks with swelling breasts, or stags with antlers thrown back. A dish for comfits is made in the shape of a ship, with swelling sails and flying flags, and is full of spices up to the hatch-way. Every possible fancy of goldsmith-work is carried out on this wondrous sideboard.

The Hall of Armour contains treasures which would tire out the pen of the most intrepid catalogue-maker. Circassian helmets, coats of mail, adorned with verses of the Koran, bucklers with filigree bosses, scimitars, kandjars with jade handles, sheaths rich with precious stones, all the weapons of the East, which are at the same time gems, blaze amid the more severe arsenal of the West. On seeing all this accumulated wealth one's brain gives way and one begs for mercy of the too complacent or too conscientious guide, who will not spare you a single object.

I like very much the Chapter Rooms of the various orders of knighthood, the orders of St. George, St. Alexander, St. Andrew, St. Catherine, which occupy a vast gallery, the motive of ornamentation of which is drawn from the quarterings of their coats of arms. Heraldic art is eminently decorative, and when applied to buildings always produces a good effect.

The sumptuousness of the furniture of the state apartments can readily be imagined without my entering into details. Everything modern luxury could produce in the way of splendour is collected here at great expense, and nothing recalls the charming Muscovite taste; but the style adopted was rendered neces-

sary by that of the palace. What greatly surprised me was to find myself at the end of the last room face to face with a pale phantom of white marble, in the costume of an apotheosis, which fixed upon me its great motionless eyes, and bent with a meditative air its Roman Cæsar's face: I certainly had not expected to find Napoleon in Moscow in the palace of the Czars.

TROÏTZA

THERE is one excursion which is certain to be suggested, and which should be made when one has a few days of leisure, after having seen the chief sights: it is a visit to the Troïtza Convent. The trip is worth the trouble, and no one ever regrets having taken it. So it was agreed I should go to Troïtza, and the Russian friend who had so kindly undertaken to show me about, took charge of the preparations. He ordered a kibitka and sent on a relay of horses, which we were to find half-way, for by making an early start the trip may be made in half a day, and Troïtza be reached early enough to enable one to get a general idea of the buildings and the site. I was strictly charged to be ready at three o'clock in the morning.

I was up and ready when the kibitka stopped before the inn door. On trying to see what kind of weather it was I noticed that the thermometer inside the house marked sixty-six degrees, while the thermometer out-

side showed over twenty-five below zero. The kibitka was waiting for us and the impatient horses tossed their heads, shaking their long manes and chewing the snow. A kibitka is a sort of box as much like a hut as a carriage and placed upon a sleigh. It has a door and a window, which must not be shut, for the breath of the passengers freezing upon the pane would turn to ice, and thus one would be deprived of air and plunged in a white darkness.

We settled ourselves as well as we could in the kibitka, packed like sardines; for although there were only three of us, the numerous garments we had put on caused us to take up as much room as six people. In addition, by way of further precaution, travelling-blankets and a bear-skin robe were thrown over us; and then we were off. It was about four o'clock in the morning. In the sky, which was of a blue black, the stars twinkled brilliantly with that bright light that denotes intense cold. The snow creaked under the steel runners of the kibitka like a pane of glass scratched by a diamond. There was not a breath of wind, and it seemed as though the wind itself were frozen. I could have gone about with a lighted candle in the hand without the flame flickering. The wind

increases enormously the rigour of the temperature; it turns inert cold into active cold, and icicles into arrow-heads. In a word, it was what might be called fine weather for Moscow, at the end of January.

Russian coachmen like to drive fast, — a fancy shared by their horses, which have to be restrained rather than excited; they always start at full speed, and until one is accustomed to the tremendous pace one fancies the horses have bolted. Our own steeds carefully observed this law, and galloped madly through the solitary and silent streets of Moscow, faintly lighted by the reflections of the snow, which recalls the dying gleams of frozen lamps. The sombre silhouettes of the houses, buildings, and churches, with quaint sky-lines and relieved by white touches, — for no obscurity quite dims the silvery brilliancy of the snow, — flashed rapidly to right and left. Sometimes the domes of chapels of which we got glimpses, looked like giant helmets overtopping the ramparts of some fanciful fortress. The silence was broken only by the watchmen walking with regular steps, and dragging their iron-shod sticks upon the pavements, in proof of their vigilance.

At the rate at which we were going we soon left the city, although it is very large; roads took the place of

streets; houses disappeared, and on either side the country showed faintly white under the night sky. It is a curious sensation to be flying fast through a pallid, indefinite landscape, enshrouded in monotonous whiteness, which resembles the plains of the moon, while men and animals are asleep, and with no other sound than the galloping of the horses and the creaking of the sleigh-runners over the snow. We might have fancied ourselves upon an uninhabited globe.

The night had been starry, but towards morning vapours ascended from the horizon, and the Muscovite dawn showed pale and with sunken eyes in the dim light; perhaps its nose was red, but the epithet "rosy-fingered" which Homer applies to the Greek Aurora, did not suit it. However, the light it gave was sufficient to show in all its extent the gloomy but rather grand landscape which unrolled before us.

My readers may perhaps think that my descriptions are all alike, but monotony is one of the characteristic traits of a Russian landscape, at least in the country we were traversing. It consists of vast plains with slight elevations, and no other hills than the low hillocks on which are built the Kremlin of Moscow and the Kremlin of Nijni-Novgorod, which are no higher than

Montmartre. The snow, which during four or five months of the year covers these flat countries, adds to the uniformity of their aspect by filling up the paths, the beds of the streams, and the valleys which these have hollowed out. All one sees for hundreds of miles is an endless white surface, slightly broken here and there by the inequalities of the ground, and, according to the position of the sun, sometimes enlivened with rosy lights and bluish shadows; but when the heavens wear their usual leaden-gray livery, the general tone is a mat white or rather a dead white. At various distances, more or less close, lines of reddish brush, half emerging from the snow, break the vast extent of white; scattered birch and pine woods here and there make a dark spot, and poles like telegraph poles mark the road from place to place, for it is often effaced by drifts. Near the road, isbas, built of round logs, the chinks filled up with moss, the roofs, the poles of which cross and form a sort of X on the summit, align their sharp gables, and on the edge of the horizon the low silhouettes of the villages, surmounted by a church with bulbous steeples, stand out. There is no life save a few flights of crows or ravens, and sometimes a moujik on his sleigh, drawn by little horses with long manes

and tails, carrying wood or other goods to a dwelling farther inland. Such is the landscape, which is reproduced incessantly, and which re-forms around you as you proceed, just as the horizon of the sea is constantly re-forming and constantly the same around a ship. Although picturesque incidents are very rare, one does not weary of looking at the vast space which fills one with an indefinable melancholy, as does whatever is great, silent, and solitary. Sometimes in spite of the speed of the horses one might fancy one's self at a standstill.

We reached the relay house, which was built of wood, the yard filled with telegas and mean-looking sleighs. In a low room moujiks in tulupes shining with grease, with blond beards and red faces lighted by eyes of a polar blue, were grouped around a copper urn and drinking tea; while others were asleep on benches near the stove, — a few felt more chilly and were lying upon it.

We were shown into an upper room, ceiled and wainscotted so that it looked like a pine box seen from inside. It was lighted by a small window, with double sashes; and for sole ornament had a picture of the Mother of God, of which the nimbus and the garments

were of stamped metal, cut out for the head and the hands, and showing the brown carnation flesh-tint which the Russians have imitated from the Byzantine school, and which gives an antique look to very recent paintings. The Child Jesus was treated in the same manner. A lamp was burning before the holy image. These figures mysteriously tanned, which one catches sight of through the holes of the gold or silver carapace, have a good deal of character and command veneration, more than pictures, preferable from an artistic point of view, would do. There is no hut so poor but that it possesses one of these images, which the dwellers in the building never pass without uncovering and frequently worshipping them.

The furniture of the room consisted of a table and a few stools, and the pleasant hot-house atmosphere made it comfortable. I threw off the pelisses and heavy garments which weighed me down, and, thanks to the provisions we had brought from Moscow, we had an excellent breakfast, washed down with caravan tea, drawn in the samovar of the inn. Then again putting on our heavy armour to protect us from the darts of winter, we settled ourselves once more in the kibitka, ready to brave gaily the rigours of the Pole.

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TROÏTZA

On approaching Troïtza the houses become more numerous, and you feel you are coming to an important place. Troïtza is indeed the centre of many pilgrimages; people resort to it from all the provinces of the Empire, for St. Sergius, the founder of this famous convent, is one of the most [illegible] in the Greek calendar. The road that leads from Moscow to Troïtza, and which we followed, is that of Yaroslav, and in summer is said to be the most travelled; we passed through Ostentina, where is a Tartar camp, through the village of Postopkoi, through Alexevikoi, where up to a few years ago were to be seen the ruins of the castle of Czar Alexis; and when the country is not covered with a mantle of snow there are to be seen [illegible] of pretty summer houses. The peasants, with their armiaks and shoes made of the bark of the lime tree, when they do not walk for [illegible] section, follow the sandy road by short [illegible] follow in kibitkas, bringing with them pillows, kitchen utensils and the [illegible] war, just like travelling tribes. During the time of our excursion the road was [illegible]

The Kremlin, a Bird's-eye View.

reaching Troïtza the ground was [illegible]

no doubt by some stream frozen in winter and covered with snow. On the other slope of the ravine, upon a broad plateau, rises picturesquely the fortress-looking convent of St. Sergius. It forms a vast square, surrounded by solid ramparts, upon which runs a covered gallery, pierced with barbicans, which shelters the defenders of the place; for the convent may well be so called, having been attacked several times. Great towers, some square, others hexagonal, rise at the corners and flank the walls at various points. Some of these towers have on their summits a band of battlements, projecting boldly, on which rise roofs that swell curiously, and that are surmounted by lanterns ending in spikes. Others bear a second tower, narrower than the first, and springing above it from a balustrade of belfries. The gate by which the convent is entered is cut in a square tower, in front of which stretches a vast square.

Above the ramparts show, with graceful and picturesque regularity, the roofs of the curious buildings which the monastery contains; a vast refectory hall, the walls of which are quadrilled and painted to resemble boss-work, facetted like diamonds, strikes the

eye by its imposing mass, which the belfry of the elegant chapel lightens up. Close by swell the five bulbous domes of the Church of the Assumption, surmounted by the Greek cross. A little farther, overtopping the sky line, the high, multicoloured steeple of the Church of the Trinity upraises its stories of turrets and carries away up into the heavens its cross adorned with chains. Other towers, belfries, and roofs are confusedly seen above the walls, but I cannot give them a definite position by description; nothing will answer but a sight of the place itself. Charming indeed are these gilded spires and cupolas, to which the snow adds a few touches of silver as they spring from the mass of edifices built in brilliant colours. They give the impression of an Oriental city.

On the other side of the square is a vast hostelry intended to receive pilgrims and travellers; it resembles a caravansary rather than an inn. Our carriage was put up there and before visiting the monastery we selected our rooms and ordered dinner. The place was not the equal of the Grand Hôtel du Louvre, or of the Hôtel Meurice, but after all it was fairly comfortable, — for the place; the temperature within was

spring-like, and the pantry seemed well stocked. The wails uttered by tourists about the filth and vermin in Russian inns surprise me.

Near the convent gate were stalls covered with small goods and curiosities, such as tourists like to carry away as souvenirs: children's toys of most primitive simplicity, coloured in an amusingly barbarous manner; Chinese white felt shoes, trimmed with rose or blue, which an Andalusian woman could scarcely put on; furred mittens; Circassian belts; Toula forks and spoons inlaid with platinum; reproductions of the great bell of Moscow; chaplets; enamelled Madonnas, with the effigy of St. Sergius; crosses of metal or wood, containing a multitude of microscopic figures in Byzantine style, mingled with inscriptions in Slavic characters; loaves of bread baked in the convent, with scenes from the Old and New Testaments stamped upon the crust; and heaps of green apples, which the Russians appear to be particularly fond of. A few moujiks, purple with cold, looked after these little shops, for here women, though they are not subjected to seclusion as in the East, scarce mingle with outer life; they are rarely met with in the streets; trade is carried on by men, and a sales-woman is an almost

unknown person in Russia. This is a survival of the old Asiatic modesty.

On the entrance gate are painted several passages from the life of St. Sergius, the great local saint. Like St. Roche and St. Anthony, St. Sergius has his favourite animal. It is neither a dog nor a pig, but a bear, a wild beast admirably fitted to figure in the legend of the Russian saint. When the venerable hermit lived in solitude, a bear used to wander around his hermitage, with evidently hostile intentions; one morning on opening his door the saint found the bear standing up and growling, its paws outstretched as if for an embrace, which was intended to be anything but brotherly. Sergius raised his hand and blessed the animal, which fell on all fours, licked his feet, and thenceforth followed him as docilely as the most submissive dog: the saint and the bear got along together thereafter most admirably.

After having cast a glance at these paintings, which, if they are not ancient, are at least restored from an antique and sufficiently Byzantine model, we entered the interior of the convent, which is very like the interior of a fortress, and is indeed one, for Troïtza has been besieged several times.

A brief historical summary of Troïtza may be desirable before passing to the description of the monuments and riches contained within its ramparts. St. Sergius lived in a hut in the centre of a vast forest pertaining to Radoneje, now Gorodok, devoting himself to prayer, fasting, and every austerity of a hermit's existence. Near his cabin he built a church in honour of the Holy Trinity, and thus created a religious centre to which the faithful were attracted. Fervent disciples desired to remain with the Master; in order to lodge them Sergius built a convent which received the name of Troïtza, which, in Russian, means Trinity, and he was elected Father Superior. This took place in 1340.

The thought of his own salvation and of heavenly things did not prevent St. Sergius taking an interest in contemporary events; the love of God in him had not extinguished the love of country; he was a patriotic saint, and as such is still the object of great veneration among the Russians. He it was who at the time of the great Mongol invasion, induced Prince Dimitri to march into the plains of the Don, against Mamaï's ferocious hordes. In order that religious excitement should be added to heroic inspiration, two

monks named by Sergius accompanied the prince to battle; the enemy was repelled, and Dimitri out of gratitude richly endowed the convent of Troïtza, an example followed by princes and czars, among these Ivan the Terrible, who was one of the most generous benefactors of the monastery. In 1393 the Tartars attacked Moscow, and ravaged the country around it after the Asiatic manner. Troïtza was already too rich a prey not to excite their covetousness, so the convent was attacked, pillaged, burned and reduced to a heap of ruins. When Nikon, once the devastating torrent had spent itself, returned to rebuild the monastery, and to bring back to it the scattered monks, he found under the débris, the miraculously preserved body of St. Sergius.

Troïtza in times of invasion and troubles served as an asylum to patriotism, and as a citadel to the nation. The Russians in 1609 defended it for sixteen months against the Poles led by the Hetman Sapieha and Lissovski. After several fruitless assaults the enemy was obliged to raise the siege. Later on, the convent of St. Sergius sheltered the young Czar Peter Alexievitch, who was fleeing from the revolt of the Strelitzes or, to speak more correctly, Streltzys, and the gratitude

of this illustrious personage, once he obtained power, enriched and transformed it into a tabernacle of treasures. Since the sixteenth century Troïtza has not been pillaged, and the convent would have offered magnificent spoils to the French army if it had pushed on so far, and if the burning of Moscow had not compelled Napoleon to retreat. Czars, princes, boyars (nobles), through pure ostentation or in the hope of obtaining the pardon of Heaven, have endowed Troïtza with incalculable wealth, which it still retains. The sceptical Potemkin, who was none the less very devout as regards St. Sergius, presented it with sumptuous ecclesiastical vestments. Besides these quantities of wealth Troïtza owned one hundred thousand peasants and vast domains, which Catherine II. secularised after having indemnified the monastery by rich presents. Formerly Troïtza held within its cells some three hundred monks; nowadays there are not more than one hundred, who scarcely fill the vast solitude of the immense convent.

The precincts of Troïtza, which is almost a town, contain nine churches, or cathedrals, as they are called in Russia, the Czar's palace, the residence of the Archimandrite, a Chapter house, a refectory, a library,

a treasury, the cells of the brethren, mortuary chapels, and offices of all kinds; symmetry was not observed, and the buildings arose, when needed, on the spot where they were wanted, as plants grow in good ground. The aspect of the place is strange, novel, foreign, and in no wise resembles the picturesqueness of Catholic convents. The melancholy of Gothic art, with its slender pillars, its pointed arches, its traceried trefoils, its heavenward spring, inspires a very different order of ideas. Here are long cloisters enclosing with their weather-worn arches a solitary green; no austere, moss-covered, rain-washed old walls, to which cling the smoke and rust of time; no architecture of endless fancifulness, varying the main theme, and turning the expected into the unexpected. The Greek religion, which from the point of view of art is less picturesque, preserves the old Byzantine formulæ and fearlessly repeats itself, caring more for orthodoxy than taste. It nevertheless obtains powerful effects of splendour and richness, and its hieratic barbarity impresses deeply the simple minded people. It is impossible for the most blasé tourist not to feel admiration as well as astonishment when he perceives at the end of an avenue of trees brilliant with frost, that opens before

him as he issues from the tower gate, the churches painted blue, bright red, apple green, outlined in white by the snow, and rising quaintly with their golden or silver cupolas amid the polychrome buildings that surround them.

The day was waning when I entered the Troïtsky Sobor or Cathedral of the Trinity, in which is the shrine of St. Sergius. Mysterious shadows heightened the magnificence of the sanctuary. On the walls long rows of saints formed dark spots against the golden backgrounds, and lived with a sort of strange, grim life; they looked like processions of serious personages standing out dark on top of a hill against the setting sun. In other more obscure corners, the painted figures were like phantoms watching with their shadowy glances what was going on in the church; touched by some stray beam here and there an aureole shone like a star in the dark heavens, or gave to the head of a bearded saint the look of the head of St. John the Baptist on the dish of Herodias. The Ikonostas, a gigantic façade of gold and gems, rose to the roof with tawny gleams and prismatic scintillations. Near the Ikonostas, on the right, a luminous focus drew the eye. Numerous lamps cast in that part

gleams of gold, silver-gilt and silver. This was the shrine of St. Sergius, the humble hermit, who rests there in a monument richer than that of any emperor. The tomb is of silver-gilt, and the baldachin of massive silver, supported by four pillars of the same metal, presented by the Czarina Anna.

Around this mass of goldsmith-work, shimmering with light, moujiks, pilgrims, devotees of all kinds, lost in admiring ecstasy, were praying, making signs of the cross, and following out the practices of the Russian devotion. It formed a picture worthy of Rembrandt. The dazzling tomb splashed the kneeling peasants with flaming light, that caused a head to shine, a beard to sparkle, a profile to stand out; while the lower part of the body remained bathed in shadow, and was lost under the coarse thick garments. There were among them superb heads, illumined by fervour and belief.

After having contemplated this most interesting spectacle, I examined the Ikonostas, wherein is set the portrait of St. Sergius, which is said to be miraculous, and which was carried first by Czar Alexis in his wars against the Poles, and next by Czar Peter the Great in his campaigns against Charles XII. It is impossible to imagine what a wealth of richness, faith,

devotion, or remorse hoping to gain the indulgence of Heaven, — have accumulated for centuries past upon this Ikonostas, which is a colossal jewel-case, a perfect mine of gems. The aureoles of the figures are covered with diamonds; sapphires, rubies, emeralds and topazes form mosaics upon the golden robes of the Madonna; the features are drawn in white and black pearls, and when room is lacking carcanets of massive gold, fixed at the two ends like the handles of drawers, are used for the setting of huge diamonds. I dare not calculate the worth of them; unquestionably it is many millions. No doubt a simple Madonna by Raphael is more beautiful than the Greek Mother of God thus adorned, yet that prodigious, Asiatic, and Byzantine magnificence is effective in its way.

The Ouspensky Cathedral or Cathedral of the Assumption, which is near that of the Trinity, is built on the same plan as the Ouspensky Cathedral in the Kremlin, the exterior plan of which is here repeated. The walls and the huge pillars which upbear the vaulting are covered with paintings that might be attributed to the personal pupils of Panselinos, the great Byzantine artist of the eleventh century. The whole church looks as if it were hung with tapestries, for no relief

breaks the immense fresco, divided into zones and compartments. Sculpture has no part in the ornamentation of religious buildings devoted to Greek worship; the Eastern Church, which makes such profuse use of the painted image, appears not to admit the carved image, and to fear a statue as if it were an idol, although *bassi-relievi* are occasionally employed in the decoration of doors, as well as of crosses and other utensils of worship. I know of no detached statues in the round save those which adorn St. Isaac's. This absence of relief-work and of sculpture gives to Greek churches a strange and peculiar aspect which one does not quite grasp at first, but which is understood later on.

In this church are the tombs of Czar Boris Godunoff, his wife, and his two children. These tombs resemble, as far as style and form go, Mussulman turbehs; religious scruple has banished the art which makes Gothic tombs such admirable monuments.

St. Sergius, the founder and patron of the convent, fully deserved to have his church on the site where formerly arose his hermitage; so that there is in Troïtza a chapel of St. Sergius, as richly ornamented as the sanctuaries of which I have just spoken. Here

is found the miraculous image of the Virgin of Smolensko, called "the Guide." The walls are covered with frescoes from top to bottom, and the Ikonostas allows the brown heads of the Greek saints to be seen through the open portions of its stamped goldwork.

Meanwhile night had fallen, and however zealous he may be, a tourist cannot carry on his trade in the dark; besides, hunger began to torment me, and I returned to the inn, where the soft temperature of Russian interiors awaited me. The dinner was fairly good. The inevitable cabbage soup with balls of forced meat, sucking-pigs, soudak, a fish peculiar to Russia like the sturgeon, formed the menu, and were washed down with a cheap, white Crimean wine, a sort of "epileptic coco," which amuses itself trying to imitate champagne, and yet, taking it all round, not unpleasant to drink. After dinner a few glasses of tea, and a few puffs of Russian tobacco, exceedingly strong, which is smoked in small pipes like those of the Chinese, — occupied me until bed time.

The next day early I continued my tourist work on the convent of Troïtza, and finished visiting the churches which I had been unable to see the day before, and which it is needless to describe in detail, for

internally they are, with a very few exceptions, mere repetitions like liturgical formulæ. On the exterior of some of the churches the rococo style mingles in the quaintest manner with the Byzantine style; besides, it is difficult to ascertain the real age of these edifices; what seems ancient may have been painted but the night before, and the traces and action of time vanish under successive coats of colour, which are constantly renewed.

I had a letter from an influential personage in Moscow for the Archimandrite, a handsome man with a long beard and long hair, of most majestic face, whose features recalled those of the human-headed Ninevite bulls. The Archimandrite did not know French, and sent for a nun who understood the language and told her in Russian to accompany me on my visit to the Treasury and other curiosities of the convent. The nun, on arriving, kissed the Archimandrite's hand, and stood silently before him until the keeper had brought the keys. Her face was one of those it is impossible to forget, and which emerge from the commonplaces of life like a dream. She wore a sort of bushel measure, like the diadem of certain Mithriac divinities, and such as is worn by popes and monks; long crêpe

lapels fell down on either side upon the full black dress, of the same kind of stuff of which barristers' gowns are made; her face, ascetically pale, with waxy yellow tones under the delicate skin, was perfectly regular. Her eyes circled by a broad, brown, heavy line, exhibited, when she raised them, pupils of a strange blue, and her whole person, though buried and as it were lost within her floating gown of black tamine, betrayed the highest breeding. She drew the folds of her dress behind her along the endless corridors of the convent, with the same air as she would have worn a court dress at some great ceremony. The charms of the former woman of the world, which she tried to dissimulate through Christian humility, returned in spite of herself. On seeing her the most prosaic imagination could not help weaving a story: what sorrow, what despair, what catastrophe of love could have brought her here? She made me think of the Duchess of Langeais in Balzac's "History of the Thirteen," whom Montriveau found within the Andalusian convent, wearing the Carmelite dress.

We reached the Treasury, where I was shown as the most precious objects a wooden goblet and a few coarse sacerdotal vestments. The nun explained to us

that the mean, wooden vase was the ciborium which St. Sergius used in celebrating mass, and that he had worn these chasubles of poor stuff, — thus transforming them into priceless relics. She spoke the purest French without any accent, and as if it were her mother tongue. While she was telling me some marvellous legend connected with these things, in the most collected manner, and yet without scepticism or credulity, a faint smile flitted over her lips, and revealed teeth whiter than all the pearls in the treasury, brilliant teeth that left an unforgettable memory like Berenice's teeth in Edgar Allan Poe's tale. These luminous teeth in that face worn by grief and austerity, brought back her youth: the nun who at first had appeared to be about thirty-six or thirty-eight, now seemed to be only twenty-five; but it was merely a flash; having felt with feminine delicacy my respectful but deep admiration, she resumed the dead look that became her habit.

Every cupboard was opened and I was enabled to see the Bibles, Gospels and liturgies, in silver-gilt bindings, encrusted with precious stones, onyx, sardonyx, agate, chrysoberyl, aqua-marine, lapis-lazuli, malachite, turquoise, with gilded silver clasps, and

antique cameos set on the covers; golden ciboriums ringed with diamonds; crosses studded with emeralds, and rubies; rings set with sapphires; vases and candlesticks of silver; brocaded dalmatics embroidered with flowers, gems, and inscriptions in old Slavic characters, formed of pearls; perfume-burners in *cloisonné* enamels; triptychs adorned with numberless figures; images of Madonnas and saints, perfect blocks of goldsmith-work, constellated with rough gems, — in a word a treasure house of Haroun-al-Raschid Christianised. As we were leaving, dazzled by these wonders, my eyes fluttering and filled with flashes, the nun made me notice, upon the shelf of a cupboard, a row of bushel measures which had escaped my notice and which did not appear to be particularly striking. She plunged her long, delicate, aristocratic hand into it and said: "These are pearls; we did not know what to do with them, and put them there; there are *eight bushels* of them."

BYZANTINE ART

HAVING gathered from some of my remarks that I was not a stranger to art, it occurred to the nun who had shown me the Treasury, that an inspection of the studios in the convent might interest me as much as these heaps of gold, diamonds, and pearls, and she therefore led me by broad passages, broken by stairs, to the great rooms in which worked the painter-monks and their pupils.

The conditions of Byzantine art are very peculiar. It does not resemble in the least what is meant by art among the nations of Western Europe or those which belong to the Latin church. It is a hieratic, sacerdotal, unchanging art; little or nothing is left to the fancy or the invention of the artist: its formulæ are as strict as dogmas. Therefore in its school there is neither progress nor decadence nor epoch. A fresco or a painting finished a score of years ago, cannot be told from a painting which is hundreds of years old; as Byzantine art was in the sixth, ninth, or tenth cen-

turies, so it is to-day. I use the term Byzantine art for lack of a more accurate expression, just as one uses the word Gothic, which is understood by everybody, although it does not convey a strictly accurate meaning. It is plain to any man who has a knowledge of painting that Byzantine art flows from a different source than Latin art, that it has borrowed nothing from the Italian schools, that the Renaissance does not exist for it, and that Rome was not the metropolis of its ideal; it lives on itself without borrowing, without improving, for at the very outset it found its own proper form, which may be criticised from an artistic point of view, but which is marvellously adapted to its purpose.

But, it will naturally be asked: Where is the centre of this carefully kept up tradition? Whence comes that uniform teaching which has come down through ages and has undergone no change in the various *milieux* it has traversed? Who were the masters obeyed by all these unknown artists, whose brush has covered the churches of the Greek ritual with such a multitude of figures that if it were possible to number them they would surpass in numbers the mightiest army?

An interesting and learned introduction by M. Didron, prefixed to the Byzantine manuscript "The Guide to Painting," translated by Dr. Paul Durand, answers most of the questions I have just asked. The author of this "Guide to Painting" is one Dionysius, a monk of Fourna of Agrapha, a great admirer of the celebrated Manuel Panselinos of Thessalonica, who appears to be the Raphael of Byzantine art, and some of whose frescoes still exist in the chief church of Kares, on Mount Athos. In a short preface, preceded by an invocation "To Mary, Mother of God and Ever Virgin," Master Dionysius thus states the object of his book: "I have sought to propagate the art of painting, — which in the days of my childhood I had so much trouble in learning in Thessalonica, — for the use of those who also wish to practise it, and to explain to them in this work with the greatest accuracy every measurement, the characters of the figures and the colours to be used for flesh and ornaments. I have further wished to explain the extent to which Nature is to be imitated; the kind of work for each subject; the various preparations of varnish, glue, plaster, and gold, and the mode of painting upon walls in the most perfect manner possible. I have also indicated the whole

series of the Old and New Testaments, the manner of representing the natural facts, the miracles in the Bible, and at the same time the parables of our Lord, the inscriptions and the epigraphs which are suitable to each Prophet; the name and the character of the face of the Apostles and the chief saints, their martyrdom and a portion of their miracles according to the order of the calendar. I have stated the manner of painting churches and given other information necessary to the order of painting, as may be seen in the table of contents. I have corrected all these materials with much pains and care, assisted by my pupil, Master Cyril of Chios, who collected the whole with great attention. Therefore pray for us all of you, that the Lord may deliver us from the fear of being condemned as wicked servants."

This manuscript, a perfect manual of Christian iconography and of pictorial technique, goes back, according to the monks of Mount Athos, to the tenth century, but it is not so old and is probably of the fifteenth century at the most; but the fact is of little importance, for the book unquestionably repeats ancient formulæ and archaic processes. Even now it serves as a guide. M. Didron, in an account of his trip to the sacred mount, where he visited Father Macarios, the

best devotional painter next to father Joasaph, says: "This bible of art stood open in the centre of the studio, and two of the youngest pupils alternately read from it aloud, while the others were busy painting as they listened to the reading."

M. Didron wished to buy the manuscript, but the artist refused to part with it at any price, for without the book he could not continue painting; however, he allowed a copy to be made of it. The manuscript contained the secret of Byzantine painting, and enabled the learned tourist — who had just visited the churches of Athens, Salamis, Triccala, Kalabach, Larissa, those in the convent of Meteors, of St. Barlaam, St. Sophia of Salonica, Mistra, and Argos — to understand how it was that he met everywhere with the same profusion of painted decoration, the same composition, the same costumes, the same ages, the same attitudes of the sacred personages. "It is," he exclaims, "surprising in its uniformity; as if a single thought, animating a hundred brushes at one and the same time, caused to bloom suddenly all the paintings in Greece."

Even now one might utter such an exclamation with just as much reason in presence of the frescoes which adorn most Russian churches.

The workshop where these paintings are prepared, and where are trained the Byzantine artists, is at Mount Athos, which is really the Italy of the Eastern church. Mount Athos, a monkish province, contains twenty great monasteries, which form as many small towns, — ten villages, two hundred and fifty isolated cells, one hundred and fifty hermitages. The smallest monastery contains six churches or chapels, and the largest thirty-three, — altogether two hundred and eighty-eight. The villages or *skites* possess two hundred and twenty-five chapels, and ten churches; each cell has its own chapel, and each hermitage its own oratory. At Kares, the capital of Mount Athos, is seen what may be called the cathedral of the whole mountain, which the monks call the Protaton or Metropolis. At the top of the eastern peak which terminates the peninsula, rises the isolated church dedicated to the Metamorphosis or the Transfiguration. There are, then, on Mount Athos, nine hundred and thirty-five churches, chapels, and oratories. Nearly all are painted in fresco, and filled with paintings on panels. In the great convents most of the refectories are also covered with mural paintings.

This surely forms a rich museum of religious art. The pupil-painter has no lack of subjects for studies

and of models to reproduce, for in the Byzantine school an artist's merit does not consist, as it does in other schools, in inventing, imagining, exhibiting originality, but in reproducing in the most faithful manner the consecrated types; the contours and the proportions of figures are settled, Nature is never consulted, tradition indicates the colour of the beard and the hair, whether they are long or short, the colour of the garments, the number of these, the direction and the thickness of the folds.

In the representations of saints in long robes, an invariable broken fold is always to be found above and below the knee. In Greece, says M. Didron, the artist is the slave of theology; his work, which will be copied by his successors, is a copy of that of the paintings of his predecessors. The Greek artist is a slave to tradition as an animal is to instinct; he draws a figure just as a swallow builds a nest or a bee a cell; the execution alone is personal to him, for the invention and the thought are the share of the fathers, of the theologians, of the Orthodox Church. Greek art takes no account of time or place: in the eighteenth century the Morean painter continues and copies the Venetian painter of the tenth, and the Athenian painter

of the fifth or sixth. The "St. John Chrysostom" in the Baptistery of St. Mark at Venice, is met with again in the Metamorphosis of Athens, the Hecatompilæ at Mistra, and the Panagia of St. Luke.

M. Didron was fortunate enough to meet at Mount Athos, in the Esphigmenon Convent, the first which he entered, a Kares painter — the monk Joasaph, who was busy ornamenting with mural paintings the porch or narthex which leads into the nave of the church. He was assisted in his work by his brother, two pupils, one of whom was a deacon, and two apprentices. The subject which he was drawing upon the yet fresh coating applied to the wall, was Christ sending forth his apostles to preach the Gospels and to baptise all nations; an important subject, containing twelve figures almost life-size. He sketched the figures without making a mistake, in a firm hand, having for cartoon or model his memory only. While he was working the pupils filled up the contours of the figures and the draperies with the colours indicated, gilded haloes around the heads, or wrote the letters of inscriptions which the master dictated while carrying on his own work. The young apprentices ground and mixed the colours. These frescoes, says Didron, exe-

cuted with such rare rapidity, were better than the works of our painters of the second or third order in the religious style; and as he expressed surprise at the talent and knowledge of Father Joasaph, who found for each personage such an appropriate inscription, and supposed he was exceedingly erudite, — the monk replied that it was not so difficult as it seemed, and that with the help of the "Guide" and a little practice, any one could do as much.

I was now about to see at work, for myself, painter-monks like those of Mount Athos, devoutly following the teaching of the "Guide;" a living school of Byzantines; the past working by the hands of the present, assuredly a rare and interesting fact.

Five or six monks of various ages, were busy painting in a large, well-lighted room with bare walls; one of them a handsome man, with a black beard and swarthy face, who was finishing a Mother of God, struck me by his look of sacerdotal gravity and the pious air with which he wrought; he was evidently much more full of devotional than artistic feeling, and painted as if he were celebrating Mass. His Mother of God might have been placed upon the apostle's easel, so severely archaic was it, and so thoroughly

contained within the rigid and sacramental lines; the serious majesty of her great black staring eyes made her look like a Byzantine empress; the portions which were to be covered by a plate of silver or gold metal cut out to allow the head and hands to show, were as carefully painted as if they were to remain visible.

Other paintings, in a greater or less stage of advancement, representing the Greek saints, and among these St. Sergius, patron of the convent, — were being completed by the laborious hands of the monkish artists. These paintings, intended to serve as ikons in chapels or private dwellings, were upon panels covered with gypsum, in accordance with the process recommended by Master Dionysius of Agrapha; they were somewhat smoky, and in no wise different from the paintings of the fifteenth or the twelfth century. The poses were as stiff and constrained, the gestures as hieratic, the folds as regular, the colour the same identical tawny, brown flesh-tint; — in a word, they were wholly in accordance with the teaching of Mount Athos. The process employed was white of egg or distemper, which was afterwards varnished. The haloes and ornaments intended to be gilded were somewhat raised in order to catch the light better. Could

the old Salonica masters have returned to this world they would have been satisfied with their Troïtza pupils.

But nowadays no tradition can be faithfully maintained; among the obstinate adherents to the old formulæ, arise from time to time adepts less deeply conscientious; a new spirit manages to force its way into the old method by some fissure or another; even those who seek to follow the manner of the painters of Mount Athos and to preserve even in our age the unchanging Byzantine style, cannot help having seen modern paintings in which freedom of invention is joined to a study of Nature. It is difficult to keep one's eyes constantly closed, so that even in Troïtza the new influences had made themselves felt. In the metopes of the Parthenon, two styles are noticed, the one archaic and the other modern. A number of the monks conformed to the rule; a few of the younger men had abandoned the white of egg for oil, and while maintaining their figures in the prescribed attitude and copying the ancient model, they allowed themselves to give to the heads and to the hands truer tones and less conventional colour; to indulge in modelling and to seek for relief; they made the femi-

nine saints more humanly pretty, the male saints less theocratically Greek; they did not point on the chin of the patriarchs and the hermits the "junciform" beard recommended by the "Guide to Painting;" their work approached more closely to painting, without, in my opinion, possessing its merits.

This more suave and agreeable manner has a good many partisans, and examples of it are to be met with in several modern Russian churches. For myself I greatly prefer the old method, which is ideal, religious and decorative, and has the advantage of prestige, of forms and colours, outside of vulgar reality. That symbolical manner of presenting a thought by means of figures settled upon beforehand, like a sacred writing, the characters of which it is not permissible to change, — strikes me as wonderfully adapted to the ornamentation of sanctuaries. Even in its rigidity there is room for a great artist to make his mark by splendour of drawing, grandeur of style, and nobility of contours.

I doubt whether this attempt to humanise Byzantine art can prove successful. There is in Russia a school of Romanticist writers, full of enthusiasm like our own, for local colour, and it defends by learned theories and

intelligent criticism the old Mount Athos style on account of its antique and religious character, its deep conviction, and absolute originality, amid the productions of Italian, Spanish, or French art. A correct idea of this controversy may be obtained by recalling the passionate defence of Gothic architecture, the diatribes against Greek architecture as applied to religious buildings, and the parallels between Notre-Dame of Paris and the church of the Madeleine, which delighted the youth of 1830 to 1835. There is in every country an era of false classical civilisation, a sort of learned barbarism, when countries fail to understand their own beauty, to know their own character, when they repudiate their own antiquities and costumes, and are prepared to demolish, in seeking to attain an insipid idea of regularity, their most marvellous national edifices. Our own eighteenth century, in other respects so great, would willingly have razed cathedrals to the ground, as being monuments in bad taste. The portal of Saint-Gervais, by De Brosse, was in all sincerity preferred to the marvellous façades of the cathedrals of Strasbourg, Chartres, and Rheims.

The nun seemed to look upon these Madonnas with blooming colours, not exactly with disdain, for

after all they represented a sacred image, worthy of adoration, but with much less respectful admiration. She stood longer before the easels on which were being wrought out paintings in the old method. In spite of my preference for the older style, I am bound to confess that some amateurs carry rather far, in my opinion, the mania for old Byzantine paintings. By dint of seeking for the artless, the primeval, the sacred, the mysterious, they become enthusiastic for smoky and worm-eaten panels, on which are but faintly discerned grim faces extravagant in drawing and impossible in colour. By the side of such images the most barbaric Christs of Cimabue would look like paintings by Vanloo or Boucher. Some of these paintings go back, it is claimed, to the fifth and even to the fourth century. I can understand that they should be sought after as archaic curiosities, but I cannot see how they can be admired from an artistic point of view. I was shown a number of them during my trip through Russia, but I confess I did not find in them the beauties that so greatly delighted their owners. In a sanctuary they may be venerable by bearing testimony to an antique faith, but their place is not in a gallery, unless it is an historical one.

Outside of this Byzantine art, of which Mount Athos is the Rome, there is not yet any Russian art properly so called, and the few artists whom Russia has produced cannot form a school; they have studied in Italy, and their works have nothing particularly national. The most famous of all and the one best known in the West, is Brulof, whose vast painting called "The Last Day of Pompeii," made quite a sensation at the Salon in 1824. Brulof painted the cupola of St. Isaac's, a great apotheosis in which he manifests much knowledge of composition and perspective. It is in a style which somewhat recalls decorative painting as it was practised about the end of the eighteenth century. The artist, who had a fine, pale, romantic, Byronic face, with quantities of long, fair hair, took pleasure in reproducing his own face, and I have seen several portraits of himself, by him, painted at different periods, which represent him as more or less worn, but always handsome, with fatal beauty. These portraits, dashed off with free fancy, appear to be the best works of the artist. A very popular name in St. Petersburg is that of Ivanof, who during several years that he was busy working on a mysterious masterpiece, made Russia expect and hope for a great painter; but that is a

legend which I shall have to treat separately, for it would carry me too far from my subject. I do not mean to say that Russia will never take its place among schools of painting; I believe that it will manage to do so when it frees itself from the imitation of foreigners, and when its painters, instead of going to Italy to copy models, take the pains to look around them, and to inspire themselves by the nature of the varying characteristic types of the immense empire which begins on the confines of Prussia and ends on the borders of China.

Still preceded by the nun, enshrouded in her long black veil, I entered a laboratory, thoroughly equipped, in which Nadar would have felt perfectly at home. To pass from Mount Athos to the Boulevard des Capucines, is an uncommonly abrupt transition. To leave monks painting Panagias on golden backgrounds and to come immediately upon others coating glass plates with collodion, is the sort of trick which civilisation plays one at the most unexpected times. The sight of a cannon aimed at me would not have surprised me more than the brass lens which happened to be pointing in my direction. It was impossible to disbelieve the evidence of my senses. The monks of

Troïtza, the disciples of St. Sergius, were engaged in taking views of the convent and in making excellent prints from the negatives; they possess the best instruments, are acquainted with the latest methods, and manipulate their plates in a room the window of which is glazed with yellow glass — a non-actinic colour. I purchased a view of the monastery, which I still possess, and which has not faded much.

In his account of his voyage to Russia, de Custine complains of not having been allowed to visit the Troïtza library. I experienced no difficulty of this kind, and saw as much as a traveller generally sees of a library, in the course of half an hour: the backs of books handsomely bound and nicely arranged upon shelves in cases. Besides works on theology, Bibles, the works of the Fathers of the Church, treatises on scholastics, Evangels, liturgies in Greek, Latin, and Slavonic, I noticed, in the course of my rapid inspection, many French books of the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries. I also glanced at the vast refectory, which has at one of its ends, a very delicately worked iron grille, through the iron arabesques of which gleams the golden background of the Ikonostas, for the refectory runs into the chapel, in order that the soul may

be fed as well as the body. Our visit was over and the nun took me back to the Archimandrite, to take leave.

Before entering the room the habits of the woman of the world overcoming the rules of monastic life, she turned towards me and bowed slightly, as a queen might have done from the steps of her throne; and in a faint, languishing and gracious smile, shone like a white flash, her brilliant teeth, preferable to all the pearls of Troïtza. Then by a change as sudden as if she had drawn down her veil, she resumed her dead look, her spectral face of renunciation of the world, and with the steps of a phantom she knelt before the Archimandrite, whose hand she kissed piously, as if it were a paten or a relic. Thereafter, she arose and vanished like a dream within the mysterious depths of the convent, leaving in my memory the ineffaceable remembrance of her brief apparition.

There was nothing more to see at Troïtza, and I went back to the inn to order our driver to bring out the carriage. The horses having been harnessed to the kibitka by a lot of ropes, the driver seated upon a narrow seat covered with sheepskin, and we ourselves snuggling warmly under the bearskin, the bill paid,

the tips given, there was nothing left but to perform the usual fantasia of a start at full galop; a slight click of the moujik's tongue made our horses fly off like the mad steed that bore Mazeppa bound to its back, and it was only when we reached the other side of the slope, overlooked by Troïtza, the domes and towers of which were still visible, that the fine little horses condescended to come down to a reasonable gait.

THE MASKED BALL, THE THEATRES, THE MUSEUMS

BY evening I was back in Moscow, ready to go to a masked ball which was to take place that evening, and for which I found tickets awaiting me at the hotel. Before the door, in spite of the intense cold, stood sleighs and carriages the lamps of which shone like frozen stars. A warm blaze of light emanated from the windows of the building in which the ball was being held, and formed with the blue moonlight one of those contrasts which dioramas and stereoptical views affect. Having traversed the vestibule, I entered an immense hall in the form of a parallelogram or playing card, set around with great pillars, resting on a broad stylobate, which formed a platform around the room, and from which steps led to the floor. This arrangement struck me as excellent, and we ought to imitate it in rooms intended for entertainments; it enables those who do not take an active part in the pleasures of dancing, to

overlook the dancers without being in their way and to enjoy comfortably the spectacle presented by the animated throng. The platform divides and groups figures in a more picturesque, more splendid, more dramatic manner. Nothing is so disagreeable as a crowd on a level; this is why society entertainments are so inferior, as regards their effectiveness, to the balls at the Opera, with the triple row of boxes filled with masked guests, forming wreaths, and the company of débardeurs, titis, Pierrettes, Red-skins and babies, ascending and descending the stairs.

Though the hall was decorated in the simplest manner, it was none the less bright, elegant, and rich; everything was white, walls, ceiling and pillars, relieved by a few quiet golden touches on the mouldings; the columns, covered with polished stucco, imitated marble admirably, and the light fell upon them in long, shining tears. On the cornices rows of tapers marked the entablature of the portico and helped out the brilliancy of the lustres. Thanks to the white colour of the hall the light equalled the brilliancy of the most splendid Italian *a giorno* illumination.

Undoubtedly movement and light are elements of enjoyment, but in order that an entertainment may

have full swing noise has to be added to it; noise, which is the breath and the song of life. The company, although very numerous, was silent; scarce did a faint whisper pass like a murmur over the groups, making a low continuous bass to the sound of the orchestra. The Russians are silent in their pleasures, and after having once had the ears deafened by the triumphant bacchanal of Opera nights, one cannot help being surprised at their quiet and taciturnity. No doubt they are inwardly enjoying themselves very much, but they do not look as if they did.

There were dominoes, a few masks, uniforms, black coats, a few Lesghin, Circassian and Tartar costumes, worn by wasp-waisted officers, but there was not a single typical costume which might be noted as belonging to the country; Russia has not yet produced its characteristic disguise. Women, as usual, were in small numbers, yet it is women one goes to a ball to meet. So far as I could judge, what is called the *demi-monde* with us is represented here only by French women exported from Mabille, by Germans, and by Swedes, who are sometimes wondrously beautiful. Possibly a Russian feminine element may also form a part of it, but it is not easy for a foreigner to recog-

nise it; so I give my remark for what it may be worth.

In spite of a few timid attempts to dance the "can-can," a Parisian importation, the entertainment was somewhat slow, and the brazen blasts of the music did not greatly help it. The arrival of the gypsies was awaited, for the ball was to be interrupted by a concert. When the gypsy singers appeared on the platform, an immense sigh of satisfaction was breathed by every one: at last the enjoyment was coming, the real entertainment was beginning. The Russians are passionately fond of gypsies and of their songs so full of exoticism and home-sickness, which make one dream of a free life in primitive nature, away from all the constraints of divine and human laws. I share that passion to excess, so I elbowed my way through the press in order to get nearer the stage where were the singing girls.

There were five or six of them, haggard, wild-looking young girls, with that sort of a shy look called out by brilliant light upon nocturnal, furtive, and vagabond creatures; they looked like does suddenly brought from a forest clearing into a drawing-room. Their costume was in no wise remarkable; they evidently had left off their characteristic dress and put on

fashionable gowns to come to the concert; the consequence was they looked like ill-dressed ladies' maids. But a single flutter of the eyelids, a black, wild glance, cast at random over the spectators, sufficed to revive all that was characteristic in them.

The music began; it consisted of strange songs of a sweet melancholy, or a mad gayety, embroidered with infinite *fiorituri*, like those of a bird which listens to itself and is intoxicated with its own song; of sighs of regret for a vanished, brilliant life, with careless returns of a joyous, free humour that laughs at everything, even at lost happiness provided freedom remain; of choruses interrupted by stamping of feet and cries well calculated to accompany those nocturnal dances that make upon the sward of clearings what are called "fairy rounds;" something like Weber, Chopin, or Liszt, in a wild state; sometimes the theme of the song was borrowed from some popular melody heard on every piano, but it disappeared under prolonged notes, trills, ornaments, and caprices; the originality of the variations made one forget the commonplaceness of the motive. The marvellous fantasies of Paganini on the "Carnival of Venice," may give some idea of these delicate musical arabesques of silk,

gold, and pearls, embroidered on coarse stuff. A gypsy, a sort of fierce-looking rascal, brown as an Indian, and recalling the gypsy types so admirably reproduced by Valerio in his ethnographic water-colours, accompanied the song of the women on the cords of a big rebec placed between his legs, and on which he performed after the manner of Eastern musicians. Another tall fellow jerked about on the platform, dancing, striking his heels, tickling a guitar, marking the rhythm on the case of the instrument with the palm of his hand, making strange grimaces and uttering from time to time an unexpected shout. He was the "gracioso," the clown, the fun-maker of the company.

I cannot describe the enthusiasm of the listeners as they crowded around the platform. They broke out into applause and shouts; they wagged their heads, they uttered cries of admiration, they took up the choruses. These mysteriously strange songs have a genuine power of incantation; they induce vertigo and delirium and produce a most incomprehensible state of mind. On hearing them one feels an irresistible desire to leave civilisation forever and to travel through the forests, in company with one of those dark-

complexioned witches with eyes like lighted coals, for these songs, so majestically seductive, are indeed the very voice of Nature, noted and seized in solitude; that is why they trouble so deeply all those upon whom weighs heavily the complicated mechanism of human society.

While still under the charm of the melody, I was wandering dreamily through the masked ball, my soul was thousands of miles away: I was thinking of a gitana of the Albaycin at Grenada, who had of yore sung to me *coplas* on an air which resembled those I had just heard, and the words of which I was seeking in some recess of my mind, when I suddenly felt my arm taken and in my ears whispered, in the sharp, thin, false voice of a humpback, affected by dominoes that desire to begin an intrigue, the well-known words —"I know you." In Paris that would have been quite natural, since I have for many years frequented first performances, the boulevards, and the museums, so that I am as well known as if I were famous; but in Moscow this statement made at a masked ball, struck my modesty as being somewhat venturesome.

The domino, whom I called upon for a proof of her assertion, whispered my name under the lace of her

mask, pronouncing it very nicely with a pretty little Russian accent which the disguised voice did not prevent my noting. We began to talk, and the conversation proved to me that if the Moscow domino had never met me before this ball, she at least knew my works thoroughly. It is difficult for an author so far away from the Boulevard des Italiens, to whom one quotes a few lines of his verse and of his prose, not to swell somewhat with satisfaction, as he breathes in this incense, which is the most delicate of all for a writer. In order to reduce my self-love to its proper position I was obliged to say to myself that the Russians read a great deal, and that the least French authors have a larger circle of readers in St. Petersburg and Moscow than in Paris itself. However, in order to return the compliment, I did my best to be gallant, and to reply to the quotations by madrigals, which is rather difficult with a domino concealed in a satin sack, the hood pulled down over the head, and the lace of the mask as long as a hermit's beard. The only thing that showed was a rather small hand, carefully gloved in black. This was too much mystery and it took too much imagination to be amiable; besides I have one defect which prevents my seizing very ardently adven-

tures at masked balls: I am inclined to suppose that the disguise covers ugliness, rather than beauty; that horrid piece of black silk, with its profile like that of a flat nose, its wrinkled eye holes, and its goat's beard, always seems to me like the mould of the face it covers, and I find it difficult to separate the one from the other; I occasionally suspect women to be ugly when masked, even though I am certain that they are young and well aware of their beauty. Of course I speak here only of the complete mask; the little black velvet mask which the great ladies among our ancestors wore when walking, allows the mouth, with its pearly smile, the delicate contours of the chin and the cheek, to show, and brings out by its intense black the rosy bloom of the complexion. It allows one to judge of the woman's beauty without quite revealing it; it is a coquettish reticence and not a troublous mystery. The worst risk one runs is to come upon a Roxelane nose instead of the Greek nose one dreamed of, and that misfortune is easily got over. But the genuine domino may, when it is taken off, when the hour of love strikes, result in sinister discoveries which make a well-bred man feel uncommonly awkward. That is why after having taken two or three turns with her, I

took the mysterious lady back to the group which she indicated, and thus ended my intrigue at the masked ball in Moscow.

My day had been pretty well filled: I had spent the morning in a convent, the evening at a ball; I had met a nun and a domino; I had seen Byzantine painters and gypsies. Surely I deserved to go to bed.

When travelling one learns the value of time better than in the course of one's ordinary avocations. Staying for a few weeks or at most a few months in a country to which one may never return, innumerable interesting things which will not again be seen attract one's attention. Not a moment is to be lost, and the eyes, like the mouth at a railway restaurant, dreading the signal of departure, swallow double quantities at a time. Every hour is filled up. The absence of affairs, of occupation, of work, of bores, of visits to be received or paid, isolation amid strange surroundings, the perpetual use of a carriage, — lengthen out life singularly, and yet strange to say the time does not appear short. Three months of travel are the equivalent, so far as duration goes, of a year's stay in one's customary abode. At home the days which are unmarked by anything in particular, fall into an abyss of forgetful-

ness, without leaving any trace behind them; but when visiting a new country, the remembrance of unwonted objects, of unforeseen acts, form guiding marks, indicate the time, measure it and make one appreciate its length.

Apelles used to say, "Nulla dies sine linea:" (for lack of the Greek I quote the Latin, for these are not the words the painter of Campaspes probably uttered.) The tourist has to modify the saying to his own use: "No day without some sight-seeing." In accordance with this precept, the day after my expedition to Troïtza I went to the Kremlin to visit the Museum of Carriages and the Treasury of the Popes.

A very interesting exhibition is that of the old and splendid carriages; coronation coaches, gala coaches, travelling and country carriages, post-chaises, sleighs and other vehicles. Man does as nature, he goes from the complex to the simple, from the enormous to the proportionate, from the sumptuous to the elegant. Carriage-building, like the fauna of primitive times, has had its mammoths and mastodons. One is filled with astonishment at the sight of those monstrous rolling machines, supporting complicated apparatus, their springs in the form of tongs, their levers, their

thick leather bands, their massive wheels, their tortuous goose-necks, the boxes as lofty as forecastles, the bodies as roomy as a modern apartment, the steps like a staircase, the outer seats for pages, the platforms for lackeys, the tops covered with traceried galleries, allegorical figures and plumes. It is a perfect world, and one wonders how such machines could move. Eight huge Mecklenburg horses could scarce manage to draw them. But if these carriages are barbaric from the present point of view of locomotion, from an artistic point of view they are marvels. Every part is carved, ornamented, and wrought with exquisite taste. On the gilded backgrounds bloom lovely paintings done by master hands; detached from their panels they would figure honourably in museums. There are cupids, groups of attributes, bouquets of flowers, wreaths, coats of arms, fancies of all kinds. The windows are of Venetian plate glass; the carpets the softest and richest that Constantinople and Smyrna could furnish; the stuffs would drive Lyons silk-weavers to despair; the sides, backs and seats are upholstered in splendid brocades, velvets, damasks, and brocatelles. The carriages of Catherine I and Catherine II contain card and toilet tables, and, a fact

worthy of notice, stoves of Saxony porcelain, coloured and gilded. The state sleighs also display an ingenious contrast of form and a charming fancifulness of ornamentation. The most curious thing however, is the collection of saddles for men and women, and harnesses of all kinds. Most of them come from the East and were given to the Czars and Czarinas by the Emperors of Constantinople, the Grand Turk and the Shahs of Persia. They display an incredible wealth of gold and silver embroidery on brocade or velvet, which disappear under it, and stars and sunbursts of gems; bits, chamfrons, and curbs are studded with diamonds; and on the leather of the reins, richly embroidered with gold or coloured silk thread, are set uncut turquoises, rubies, emeralds and sapphires. Like the Asiatic barbarian that I deserve to be, I confess that this extravagantly splendid saddlery charms me more than modern English saddlery, very fashionable no doubt, but so meagre of aspect, so poor as regards the stock, and so sober in ornamentation.

The sight of these immense and sumptuous carriages tells one more about the former life of the court than all the memoirs of Dangeau and other palace chronicles. It makes one think of vast lives impos-

sible to be lived nowadays, even with absolute power, for the simplicity of modern manners invades the dwellings of sovereigns. The full dress for ceremonial days is now only a disguise which we hasten to throw off after the festival; save on the day of his coronation the Emperor never wears his crown, but either a military or civil head-dress like any one else; and if he goes out to drive, it is no longer in a gilded coach drawn by white horses tossing their plumed heads. Formerly such magnificence was of daily occurrence; men lived familiarly in that splendour; death was the only thing common to kings, great nobles, and common men, and the former passed before the dazzled earth like beings of another race.

I was shown the Treasury of the Popes, which is also in the Kremlin. It is the most amazing collection of wealth imaginable. There are arranged in cases, the doors of which are half opened like the shutters of a reliquary, tiaras, mitres, caps of Metropolitans and Archimandrites, mosaics of gems, brocaded dalmatics, copes, stoles, robes of gold or silver cloth, all embroidered in figured patterns, or covered with inscriptions written in pearls. At Troïtza I might well have believed there were no pearls left in the world, that

the Troïtza Convent had collected them all in those bushel measures: but there were just as many in the Treasury of the Popes. Innumerable were the silver, silver-gilt and gold ciboriums, chased, inlaid, engraved, circled with zones of enamels, ringed with precious gems; of crosses peopled with microscopic figures; of rings, of croziers, of fabulously rich ornaments; of lamps, of candlesticks; of books bound with plates of gold, constellated with onyx, agate, lapis-lazuli and malachite. These I beheld behind the glass fronts, with that mingled pleasure and discouragement of the traveller who when he can devote a few lines only feels that he would need a whole monograph that it would take a life-time to write.

That evening I went to the theatre, which is large and splendid, and recalls, in its general arrangement the Odéon at Paris and the Bordeaux Theatre. Such perfect regularity makes little impression upon me, and for my own part I should prefer the least architectural fancy in its disorderliness and bloom, in the style of the Vassily Blajenny or the Granovitaïa Palata, but that would be less civilised and would be considered barbaric by people of good taste. Nevertheless I must confess that once the type is accepted the style

of the Moscow theatre leaves nothing to be desired; everything in it is grandiose, monumental and sumptuous; the red and gold chosen for the decoration of the hall, please the eye by their serious richness, favourable to dress; and the imperial box placed exactly opposite the stage, with its gilded staffs, its two-headed eagles, its coats of arms and its lambrequins, produces a majestic and splendid effect; it takes up in height two rows of boxes and happily breaks the curved lines of the galleries. As in La Scala, San Carlo and in all the great Italian theatres, a passage way runs around the orchestra stalls, and facilitates access to the seats; — an access made still easier by another passage way left free in the centre. Nowhere is space parsimoniously economised as with us. It is possible to go in and out without disturbing any one, and to talk, from the outside, with the ladies in the boxes. The orchestra stalls, the first rows of which by a tacit convention are reserved to people of title, of high official rank and other important personages, — are very comfortable. A merchant, however rich and however honourable he may otherwise be, would not dare to sit nearer than the sixth or seventh row from the front. The same hierarchy is observed in the rows of boxes, at least

such was the case at the time of my trip; but whatever the place which one takes it is certain to prove comfortable: the spectator is not sacrificed to the spectacle, as is too frequently done in the theatres of Paris, and pleasure is not purchased at the price of torture. One enjoys the amount of space that Stendhal considered necessary for the proper appreciation of music, without being troubled by the enthusiasm of one's neighbor. Thanks to the art of heating, which the Russians possess in the highest degree, because it is with them a matter of life and death, — a pleasant, equable temperature is maintained everywhere; and one does not run the risk, on opening the door or the window of the box, of being struck in the face by a blast of cold air.

In spite of all its comfort, the Moscow theatre was not well filled that evening; there were a great many empty places in the boxes and almost whole lines of stalls remained unoccupied, or at least here and there showed only a few groups of scattered spectators. It takes an enormous crowd to fill these vast theatres; in Russia everything is too large, and seems intended for the population of the future. It was a ballet night, for ballet and opera alternate in Russian theatres and are

not combined as with us. I cannot remember the fable or the story of the ballet performed that day; it was as disconnected as any Italian one, and merely served to link together a series of steps suited to the talent of the dancer. Although I have myself drawn up ballet programmes and consequently understand pretty well the language of pantomime, I found it impossible to follow the thread of the action through the *pas de deux*, the *pas de trois*, the *pas seuls*, and the evolutions of the "corps de ballet," which manœuvred with admirable *ensemble* and precision. What most struck me was a sort of mazurka performed by a dancer named Alexandrof, with a pride, elegance and grace far removed from the most unpleasant affectations of ordinary dancers.

A traveller's life is made up of contrasts. The next morning I went to visit the Convent of Romanoff, a few versts from Moscow. It is famous for its beautiful music. Like Troïtza it has the external appearance of a fortress; within its vast boundaries are a great number of chapels and buildings, and a cemetery which looked particularly lugubrious on this winter 's day; gloomy indeed were the snow-covered crosses, the funereal urns and columns that broke through the

white sheet outspread over the dead like another shroud. One is haunted by the thought that the poor dead that are lying under their icy coverlet must be very cold and must feel more forgotten than ever, for the snow effaces their names and the pious inscriptions which accompany them and that recommend their souls to the prayers of the living. After a melancholy glance at these half-covered tombs, the deserted appearance of which was increased by the black foliage of the evergreen trees, I entered the church. The gilded Ikonostas amazed me by its prodigious height, which surpassed that of the most gigantic Spanish retables. Service was going on and I was straightway surprised to hear sounds like those produced by the double diapasons of our organs; for I knew that the Greek ritual does not admit of the use of these instruments. I soon found an explanation of the matter, for as I approached the Ikonostas I caught sight of a group of bearded chanters, dressed in black like popes; instead of singing with full voice as ours do, they strive after softening effects, and produce a sort of drone the charm of which it is easier to enjoy than describe. Imagine the sound produced on summer evenings by a flight of gray night moths; it is a grave, sweet and

penetrating note. There were about a dozen of them and I could tell the bass singers by the way they swelled out their chests while the melody issued from their lips, without these being perceptibly moved. The finest religious singing I have heard has been in the Imperial Chapel at St. Petersburg and in this Convent of Romanoff. No doubt we possess more learned and beautiful musical compositions, but the way in which plain-song is sung in Russia adds to it a mysterious grandeur and inexplicable beauty. I am told it was St. John Damascene who, in the eighth century, was the great reformer of sacred music; it has been modified but little since, and it was the same chants, arranged for four voices by modern composers, that I heard. Italian influence invaded sacred music for a time, but not for long; and Emperor Alexander I would not permit any other singing in his own chapel than the old chants.

On returning to the hotel, still full of this celestial harmony, I found letters recalling me to St. Petersburg, and I regretfully left Moscow, the real Russian city, with its Kremlin crowned with a hundred domes.

HOMEWARD BOUND

FOR days, weeks, indeed for months I had been putting off my return to France. St. Petersburg had proved a sort of frozen Capua in which I had allowed myself to be charmed by the pleasures of a delightful life; and it was hard for me, I confess it without shame, to return to Paris to resume the newspaper yoke which has bruised my shoulders for so many years. To the great attraction of new things was added that of the most pleasant intercourse; I had been petted, feasted, spoiled, loved even, at least I am conceited enough to believe it; and I could not part from all these things without regret. A new life had enveloped me, suave, caressing, and flattering, and I found it difficult to throw off that soft pelisse. Yet I could not remain forever in St. Petersburg. More pressing letters constantly arrived from France, and the great day was at last definitely fixed.

I was a member of the Friday Society, a company of young artists who used to meet every Friday, now

at the studio of one, now at the studio of another, to spend the evening in drawing, painting in water-colours or in sepia, improvised compositions which were sold by Begrof, and the proceeds of which were devoted to the assistance of some impoverished comrade. At about midnight a jolly supper closed the evening's labours. It so happened that on the Friday, the day before I was to leave, it was my turn to treat the company, and the whole band met at my lodgings, situated in the Morskaïa Street. As usual the evening was begun with work; everyone sat down to his desk, prepared beforehand, with a shaded lamp; but the work did not get on very well; we were all preoccupied, conversation interfered, and the sepia or Indian ink not infrequently dried up in their saucers between one touch and another. For more than seven months I had lived on a footing of true comradeship with these clever, sympathetic young fellows, lovers of the beautiful and full of generous ideas. Now I was about to leave, and when one parts who knows when one will ever meet again, especially when separated by a great distance, and when one's lives, which have run together for a time, are about to resume their ordinary course. So a certain melancholy hovered over the Friday com-

pany, and the announcement of supper came very opportunely to sweep it away. The toasts drunk to my happy trip revived gaiety, and the stirrup cup was drunk at such length that my friends resolved to remain up till daylight, and to accompany me in a body to the railway station.

Spring was on its way; the great break-up of the Neva had taken place, and only a few belated ice-floes were carried along by the current, to melt in the warm gulf henceforth open to navigation. The roofs had lost their ermine covering, and in the streets the snow, changed into a black slush, formed puddles and quagmires at every step. The damage done by the winter, long masked by the white layer, now appeared clearly; the pavements were disjointed, the roads broken, and our drojkis, roughly jolted from rock to rock, broke our backs and made us jump like peas in a gridiron. However, the bad state of the roads never prevents the izvochtchiks from going as if the devil was after them; provided the two front wheels go with them, they are perfectly satisfied and do not trouble about their fare.

We soon reached the railway station, and then thinking that the separation had come too soon, the whole company got into the carriage with me and in-

sisted upon accompanying me as far as Pskof, at that time the terminus of the road. This habit of escorting parents or friends who are leaving, strikes me as peculiar to Russia, and I think it is a touching custom: the bitterness of departure is softened by it, and solitude does not suddenly succeed embraces and handshakings. But at Pskof we had to part, my Friday friends returned to St. Petersburg, and I felt that this was the final departure, that the real voyage was about to begin.

I was not returning alone to France: I had for travelling companion a young man who had lived in the same house with me in St. Petersburg, and with whom I had soon formed a friendship. Although he was French he knew, wonderful to say, almost all the Northern tongues, — German, Swedish, Polish, and Russian; he spoke the latter as if it were his mother tongue. He had often travelled through Russia, in every direction, on every kind of vehicle, and in every temperature. When travelling he practised wondrous sobriety: could do without almost any food or drink, and stood fatigue amazingly, although apparently he was delicate and accustomed to the most comfortable life; but for him I never could have managed to return at that time of the year and over such wretched roads.

Our first care was to hunt through Pskof for a carriage which we could hire or buy, and after much going and coming we found a sort of broken down drojki the springs of which did not seem very trustworthy. We purchased it on condition that if it broke down before we had travelled forty versts the seller should take it back less a small commission. It was my prudent friend who bethought himself of this arrangement, and a very wise plan it was, as will presently be seen. Our trunks were fastened at the back of the frail vehicle; we sat down upon the narrow bench, and the driver sent his horses off at a gallop. It was the very worst season of the year for travelling. The road was one long mudhole, somewhat more consistent by comparison with the vast sea of liquid mud which it traversed. To right, to left, and before us, the prospect was composed of dirty gray sky, resting upon a horizon of black, wet ground, with here and there the wild-looking, reddish branches of a few half-submerged birch trees, the gleam of pools of water, and log-huts on the roofs of which remained a few spots of snow, that looked like pieces of paper carelessly torn away. In the deceitful warmth of the temperature, there was felt, as evening came on, blasts of sharp

wind that made me shiver under my furs; the wind did not grow warmer as it blew over that mixture of ice and snow. Flights of crows marked the sky with black dots, and flew with loud croaks to their night's rest. It was not very gay, and but for the conversation of my comrade, who was telling me of one of his trips to Sweden, I should have become very melancholy indeed.

Moujik carts laden with wood travelled along the road, drawn by little horses bespattered like poodles and sending the mud flying about them; but on hearing the bells of our horses they respectfully drew aside and allowed us to pass. One of the moujiks was even honest enough to drive after us to bring up one of our trunks, which had fallen off, though we had not heard it, owing to the noise we were making ourselves.

Night had nearly fallen and we were not very far from the post-house. Our horses were going like the wind, excited by the neighbourhood of their stable. The poor drojki jumped upon its weak springs and followed diagonally the flying animals, the wheels being unable to turn quickly enough through the thick mud; a stone we struck gave us such a violent shock that we were nearly thrown into the quagmire; one of the springs

had broken and the forebody had separated from the rest of the vehicle. The coachman got down and with a piece of rope repaired the broken carriage as well as he could, so that we managed to reach the relay-house. The drojki had not lasted fifteen versts. It was impossible to think of continuing our trip in such an old rattle-trap; there were in the courtyard of the post-house no other carriages than telegas, and we had yet five hundred versts to go before reaching the frontier.

In order that my readers may thoroughly grasp the horror of our situation a brief description of a telega is necessary. This peculiarly primitive vehicle is composed of two boards placed lengthwise on two axles, with two wheels apiece; narrow side planks border the boards; a double rope covered with a sheepskin is fastened to these and forms a sort of swing on which the traveller has to sit; the postilion stands upon the cross beam or sits down on a bit of board, and the trunks are piled up behind. To this machine are harnessed five horses which a cabman would refuse at once, so wretched do they look when at rest; but the best race horses would find it difficult to follow them once they have started. This is not a mode of transport to be recommended to sybarites, but it is a very

rapid one, and a telega is the only kind of carriage which can stand being driven over roads broken by a thaw.

We held a council of war in the yard. My companion said to me: "You wait for me here; I shall drive on to the next relay and will return for you with a carriage if I find one."

"What is that for?" I replied, rather astonished at his proposal.

"Because," replied my friend, refraining from smiling, "I have started on many a telega trip with comrades who appeared both courageous and robust; they climbed proudly on to the swing and during the first hour confined themselves to making a few faces and indulging in a few contortions which they at once repressed; then very soon with sore backs, sore knees, sore waist, their brain jolting about in their skull like a dry nut in a shell, they began to grumble, to complain, to lament, to curse; some indeed even wept and begged me to let them get down or to throw them into a ditch, preferring to die of hunger and cold on the spot, or be eaten by wolves, to submitting any longer to such torture. No one of them ever travelled more than forty versts."

"You have too poor an opinion of me; I am not a soft traveller; the galleys of Cordova, the floor of which is formed of esparto; the tartanas of Valencia, which are like the boxes in which marbles are rolled in order to make them round, did not draw a single complaint from me; I have travelled post on a cart, hanging by my hands and feet to the sideboards. A telega cannot possibly surprise me. If I should complain you may reply to me as did Guatemotzin to his companion on the gridiron: 'Do you suppose that I am on a bed of roses?'"

My proud answer seemed to convince him; the telega was harnessed, our trunks put on and we were off.

But what about dinner? for the Friday supper must have been digested by this time and a conscientions traveller is bound to give his readers the menu of every meal he takes on the road. We had only a glass of tea and a thin slice of brown bread and butter, for when one starts upon such extravagant trips eating is out of the question, as it is with postilions when they are riding post at full speed.

I should not care to maintain the paradox that a telega is the most comfortable of carriages, yet it ap-

peared to me more tolerable than I had expected, and I managed without too much difficulty, to keep my place on the horizontal rope somewhat softened by the sheepskin placed upon it. As night fell the wind became cold, the sky was cleared of clouds, and the stars shone clear and bright in the sombre blue heavens, as if frosty weather were coming on.

During a thaw cold spells are not infrequent; the Northern winter finds it difficult to go back to the Pole and returns sometimes to cast handfuls of snow in the face of spring. By midnight the mud was all hardened, the pools of water were frozen, and the heaps of petrified mud caused the telega to jolt worse than ever.

We reached the post-house, easily known by its white façade and its pillared portico. All these relay houses are alike, and are built from one end of the empire to the other on one regular model. Our bundles and ourselves were taken off the telega and put on to another, which at once started; we were going at full speed, and objects vaguely seen through the shadows, fled in disorderly fashion on either side of the road, like a routed army, as if an unknown enemy were pursuing these phantoms. The hallucinations of night began to cloud my eyes, already heavy with sleep, and

in spite of myself dreams mingled with my thoughts; I had not gone to bed the night before and the absolute need of sleep caused my head to bob from one shoulder to the other. My companion made me sit down in the bottom of the carriage and held my head between his knees, to prevent my cracking my skull against the side boards. The most violent jolting of the telega, which occasionally on sandy or miry places on the road, travelled over logs placed crosswise, failed to awaken me, but caused the outlines of my dream to deviate like the drawing of an artist whose elbow is shoved while he is working; a figure begun with the profile of an angel turns into the face of a little devil.

I slept for about three-quarters of an hour and awoke rested and refreshed as if I had slept in my own bed. Speed is the most intoxicating pleasure; it is delightful to go along like a whirlwind, in the hurly-burly of bells and wheels through the great silence of night, when all men are resting, and one is seen only by the stars that wink their golden eyes and seem to point out the road; the feeling that one is doing something, travelling on, proceeding towards a distinct end, during these hours usually lost, fills one with curious pride, leads to indulgence in self-admira-

tion and makes one begin to despise somewhat the Philistines, who are snoring under their blankets.

At the next relay the same ceremony took place: a most fantastic entry into the yard, and a rapid transshipment of our persons from one telega to the other.

"Well," I said to my companion when we had left the post-house, and the postilion was sending his horses at full speed along the road, — "I have not yet begged for mercy; the telega has been jolting us for many a verst; yet my arms still stick to my shoulders, my legs are not broken, my backbone still supports my head."

"I did not know you were such a veteran; the worst is over now, and I fancy I shall not be obliged to drop you by the road side, with a handkerchief at the end of a stick, to call for help from the barouches or post-chaises which might pass through this deserted country. But since you have had a sleep it is your turn to sit up and watch; I am going to close my eyes for a few minutes. Do not forget, in order to keep up the speed, to thump the moujik in the back from time to time; he will pass it on with his whip to the horses. Also call him 'dourak,' in as big a voice as you can: it will do no harm."

I conscientiously discharged the task allotted me, but I may as well state at once, in order to free myself in the eyes of philanthropists of the reproach of barbarism, that the moujik wore a thick sheepskin coat, the wool of which deadened every outside blow: I might as well have been hitting a mattress.

When day dawned I saw with surprise that during the night snow had fallen over the country we were about to traverse. Gloomy indeed did that snow look, for its thin layer only half covered, like a ragged shroud, the ugliness and wretchedness of the land soaked and softened by a recent thaw. On the slopes on which its narrow lines rose and fell it looked somewhat like the pillars of Turkish tombs in the cemetery of Eyoub or Scutari, which the sinking of the ground has caused to fall or to lean over in quaint attitudes. Presently the wind began to drive in great whirls a sort of fine, minute, pulverized snow, very much like hoar frost, which stung my eyes and that portion of my face which the need of breathing compelled me to leave uncovered. It is impossible to imagine anything more disagreeable than that wearing little torture, augmented by the speed of the telega, which was facing the wind. My moustache was soon constellated with white pearls

and bristling with stalactites, through which my breath issued vaporous and bluish like tobacco smoke. I was cold to the marrow, and I felt that unpleasant sensation which precedes dawn, known to every traveller and every sort of nocturnal adventurers. However hardened to travelling one may be, a telega does not come up as a resting-place to a hammock, or even to the green leather sofas found everywhere throughout Russia.

A hot glass of tea and a cigar which I enjoyed at the relay while the horses were being put to set me up again, and I proudly continued on my way, thoroughly enjoying the compliments of my comrade, who said he had never seen a Westerner bear up so heroically in a telega.

It is very difficult to describe the country we were traversing, as it appears at this time. It consists of slightly undulating plains, blackish in tone and on which are seen poles intended, when the snows of winter have effaced the roads, to show the way; in summer they must look like telegraph poles out of work. Nothing is seen on the horizon but birch forests, sometimes half burned; scattered villages lost in the wastes and indicated only by their churches with

their little bulbous cupolas painted apple green. At this moment, upon the dark background of mud which the frost of the night had hardened, the snow had cast here and there great bands like pieces of linen laid out on meadows to whiten in the dew; or if this comparison seems to you too pleasing a one, like the galloons of white thread seen on the rusty black of a mortuary pall of the lowest class. The faint light which came through the vast gray cloud that covered the heavens, was lost in diffused gleams, and gave neither high lights nor shadows to objects. There was no modelling; the contour of everything seemed to be illumined with a mere, flat tint. In the dull light everything looked dirty, gray, washed out, wan, and a colourist would have been as disappointed as a draughtsman at this faint, undefined, vague landscape, which was morose rather than melancholy. But what consoled me and prevented my wearying, notwithstanding the regret I felt on leaving St. Petersburg, was the fact that we were homeward bound; every jolt through this gloomy country brought us nearer the Fatherland, and after seven months' absence I will be able to judge whether my Parisian friends have or have not forgotten me. Besides, the very motion on a diffi-

cult trip keeps one up, and the satisfaction of triumphing over obstacles takes away one's mind from smaller troubles. When a man has seen much of a country and does not expect to constantly encounter enchanting persons, he becomes accustomed to those glimpses of nature which at times does poor work and nods like the greatest poets. More than once one feels tempted to say, like Fantasio in Alfred de Musset's play: "That sunset is a failure. Nature is wretched tonight. Look at that valley yonder and at those miserable clouds ascending that mountain. I used to draw landscapes like that on the cover of my books when I was twelve."

We had long since passed Ostrof, Registza, and other villages and towns, concerning which it will be readily understood I did not make very careful observations from the top of the telega; but even had we remained longer in each one of them I could only have repeated descriptions already given, for all these places are alike: one always comes upon the same board fences, the same wooden houses with double sashes through which one gets a glimpse of an exotic plant, the same green painted roofs, the same churches with their five belfries, and their narthex adorned with

paintings after the Byzantine model. In the centre of it all stands out the post-house with its white façade, in front of which hang about a few moujiks in greasy tulupes, and a few yellow-haired children; as for women, they are rarely visible.

The day was waning and we could not be very far from Dunabourg. We reached it in the dying light of a livid sunset, which did not cause this city, inhabited mostly by Polish Jews, to look particularly attractive. The sky was like that one imagines in a painting representing a plague of a dull gray, full of morbid, greenish tints like those of decomposing flesh; under that sky the black houses soaked with rain or melting snow, and suffering from the ravages of winter, resembled piles of wood or filth half submerged in a village of mud; the streets were perfect quagmires, the melting waters flowed into them from all sides, seeking their lowest level, yellow, earthy, blackish, bearing with them an incredible quantity of nameless débris. Swamps of mud filled the squares, spotted here and there by islets of dirty snow that still resisted the western wind. In this loathsome filth, which would have made a man sing a hymn in honour of Macadam, the telega wheels revolved like the paddles of a steamer

in a muddy stream, splashing the walls and the few passers-by, who wore long boots like oyster fishermen. We sank into this stuff up to the axles. Happily below this deluge the wooden pavement still existed, and although it was distorted by water, it did present at a certain depth a somewhat firm surface, which prevented our disappearing with our horses and our carriage, as one does in the quicksands of Mont Saint-Michel.

Our pelisses, thanks to the constant spattering of mud, had become regular celestial globes with innumerable constellations of mud, undescribed by astronomers; and if it were possible to look dirty in Dunabourg people would not have picked us up with a pair of tongs.

Single travellers are rare at this time of year; few people are bold enough to travel in a telega, and the only other possible mode of transportation is the mail carrier's cart; but one has to book a place a long time ahead, and we had left suddenly, like a soldier who sees his leave nearly up and has to rejoin his regiment at any cost under pain of being considered a deserter.

My companion went on the principle that one should eat as little as possible on trips like the one we were taking, and he was more temperate than a Spaniard or

an Arab. Nevertheless, when I represented to him that I was dying of hunger, not having taken anything since Friday night and it was now Sunday evening, he condescended to what he called my weakness, and leaving the telega at the relay house, started with me in search of food. Dunabourg goes to bed early and but few lights shone on its sombre façades. It was not easy to walk through the mud; at every step I took it seemed to me that an invisible bootjack was catching hold of my shoes by the heel. At last we saw a reddish light issuing from a sort of hovel that looked somewhat like a tavern. The reflection of the light was prolonged over the limpid mud in red streaks like blood flowing from a slaughter-house. It was not very appetising, but when one is as hungry as I was, these things matter little. We entered without allowing ourselves to be driven back by the sickening smell of the place, in which a smoky lamp was burning with difficulty in the mephitic atmosphere. The room was full of Jews of strange aspect, with long, narrow-chested coats like cassocks, shining with grease, the colour of which might have been black as much as violet, or maroon as much as olive; but which at that moment was of a shade which I will call condensed

dirt. They wore queer-shaped hats with broad brims and enormous crowns; these had lost their colour, and were shapeless, greasy, the nap bristling in places, gone in others, old enough for the rag picker to refuse to have anything to do with them. And such boots! the glorious Saint-Amant alone could describe them; they were down at heel, worn out, twisted in spirals, whitened by layers of half-dried mud, like the feet of elephants that had long plunged through the Indian jungles. Several of these Jews, especially the younger, wore their hair parted on the forehead, and let fall behind their ear a long curl like a love-lock, a piece of coquetry that contrasted with their horrible filth. They were not the handsome Oriental Jews, heirs of the patriarchs who have preserved their biblical nobility, but horrible Polish Jews, who carry on in filth all manner of low trades and sordid industries. Yet lighted as they were, even with their thin faces, their restless, piercing eyes, their beards forked like fish tails, their sour complexions and their colouring like that of a smoked herring, they recalled Rembrandt's paintings and etchings.

These customers did not seem to be very profitable to the establishment; in the dark corners there were

it is true, to be seen a few fellows slowly drinking down a glass of tea or vodka, but there was not a trace of solid food. Understanding and speaking German and the Polish tongue of the Jews, my comrade asked the tavern keeper whether he could not arrange to give us some kind of a meal. This request seemed to surprise the man; it was the Sabbath day, and the food prepared the night before for this day, on which it is forbidden to do anything, had been devoured, crumbs and all. Nevertheless our starving appearance touched him; his pantry was empty, his fire was out, but he thought he might find some bread in the next house. He consequently gave orders to this effect, and in a few minutes we saw appearing amid this mass of human rags, bearing with a triumphant air a sort of flat cake, a young Hebrew girl of marvellous beauty, the Rebecca of "Ivanhoe," the Rachel of "la Juive," a real sun blazing like an alchemist's macrocosm in the darkness of that sombre room. Eliezer at the well would have presented her with Isaac's betrothal ring. She was the purest imaginable type of her race, a genuine biblical flower blooming, Heaven knows how, upon this dung-hill. The Shulamite of Sir Hasirim was not more orientally intoxicating. Such

gazelle eyes as she had! such a delicately aquiline nose, such lips, red as double-dyed Tyrian purple, that showed upon a mat pallor; such a chaste oval from the temples to the chin! well made to be framed within the traditional band. She held out the bread smilingly like the maids of the desert who bend their urn to the thirsting lips of the traveller; but smitten with admiration of her, I did not think of taking it. A faint flush coloured her cheeks when she perceived my admiration, and she placed the bread on the table. I uttered a suppressed sigh as I remembered that the age of passionate adventures had long since gone by for me; and while dazzling my eyes with the radiant apparition I began to bite at the bread, which was at once uncooked and burned, but which seemed to me as delicate as if it had come from the Viennese Bakery in the Rue de Richelieu.

There was nothing to keep us in the den; the lovely beauty had gone; her disappearance causing the smoky room to look even darker than before, so we returned to our telega with a sigh, remarking that it was not always velvet jewel-cases that contained the finest pearls.

We soon reached the bank of the Dvina, which we had to cross. The banks are high and the bed of the

river is reached by pretty steep board inclines. Fortunately the skill of the postilions is marvellous, and the little Ukraine horses are very sure footed. We got down without accident and in the darkness we could hear the waters boiling and seething. The stream is crossed neither by a bridge of boats nor by a ferry, but by a series of rafts placed end to end and bound together by cables; this enables them to resist better the swelling of the waters, as they rise and fall. The crossing, though not really dangerous, was somewhat terrifying. The stream swollen by the melting snows, flowed full, and fought against the obstacles presented by the rafts, the cables of which it stretched taut. At night water easily assumes a lugubrious and fantastic appearance; gleams of light, falling no one can tell whence, move about like phosphorescent serpents; the foam sparkles in a strange way that makes the dark seem darker. One appears to be floating upon an abyss, and it was with a feeling of satisfaction that we reached the other bank, carried away by our horses that galloped up the slope almost as rapidly as they had galloped down the opposite one.

We were flying again over the great black stretches, getting merely a glimpse of shapes that vanished from

my memory as swiftly as they passed before my eyes, and of which no description can give any idea. These faint visions which arise and vanish as one rides along, are not without a certain charm of their own; it is like galloping through a dream; the glance would like to penetrate the vague, cotton-wool like obscurity in which all the contours are softened, and where the various objects are merely darker spots.

I was thinking of the lovely Jewess whose face I was imprinting deeply in my memory, like a draughtsman who goes over the outlines of his sketch lest it should be effaced; I tried to remember how she was dressed but I could not succeed in doing so; I had been so absolutely dazzled by her beauty that I had seen her face only; all the rest was plunged in shadow; the light was concentrated upon her, and if she had been dressed in gilded brocade flowered with pearls it would not have been noticed any more than a cotton rag.

At day-break the weather changed and turned decidedly wintry. Snow began to fall, but this time in great flakes; layer fell upon layer and soon the country was white as far as we could see. Every moment we were obliged to shake ourselves in order not to be

buried in the telega, but it was lost labour: in a few moments we were again dusted all over like tarts sugared by the confectioner. The silvery down mingled, ascended and fell under the breath of the wind; it was just as if innumerable feather beds were being emptied from on high, and we could not see four yards ahead through the whiteness. The little horses impatiently shook their wild manes: the wish to get away from the storm lent them wings and they galloped at full speed towards the relay in spite of the resistance offered to the wheels by the new fallen snow.

I have a queer love of snow and nothing delights me so much as that glazed rice powder which whitens the brown face of the earth. I prefer its virginal, immaculate whiteness, which sparkles like Parian marble, to the richest tints; and when I am travelling over a snow-covered road I feel as if I were walking on the silver sands of the Milky Way. On this occasion I must own, my taste was too largely gratified, and our situation in the telega began to be unbearable; even my friend, impassible though he was and accustomed to the rigour of hyperborean travelling, agreed that we should be more comfortable by the side of a stove in a well closed room, or even in an ordinary post-chaise,

supposing a post-chaise could have travelled in such weather.

The storm soon changed to a blizzard. Strange indeed is this down-flecked tempest: a low wind sweeps the earth and drives the snow onward with irresistible violence; white, smoky clouds cover the ground with whirling flakes like the frozen smoke of a Polar conflagration. When the blast strikes a wall it heaps up the snow against it, soon tops it and falls on the other side like a cascade. In one moment ditches and beds of streamlets are filled up; roads disappear and can be traced only by means of the guide poles. If one were to stop one would be buried in five or six minutes as under an avalanche. Trees bend, posts yield, animals bow their heads to the wind that carries along those vast masses of snow. It is the khamsin of the Steppes.

This time it is true, the danger was not very great; it was daylight; the quantity of snow which had fallen was not very great, and we could enjoy the spectacle almost without peril. But at night a blizzard may very well overwhelm and destroy you.

Sometimes there passed through the whiteness, like black cloth rags, flights of crows or ravens, borne

along by the wind, upset and capsised on the wing. We also met two or three moujiks' carts trying to regain their huts and fleeing before the tempest.

It was with genuine satisfaction that we faintly saw on the edge of the road through these chalky hatchings that crossed in every direction, the post-house with its Greek portico. No building ever appeared to me so sublime. In a twinkling we were out of the telega, we had shaken off the snow from our fur coats, and had penetrated into the travellers' room with its warm temperature. At the relay houses the samovar is kept constantly boiling and a few sips of tea as hot as my palate could bear soon restored the circulation of my blood, somewhat cooled by so many hours spent in the icy air.

"I would willingly undertake with you a voyage of discovery to the North Pole," said my friend, "and I think you would prove a charming companion. How comfortably we could live in a snow hut with plenty of pemmican and bears' hams."

"I am proud of your approbation, for I know that you are not naturally a flatterer; but now that I have sufficiently proved that I can resist jolts and the weather, it seems to me it would not be a proof of cowardice if

we tried to discover a pleasanter way of continuing our trip."

"Let us go and see if there be in the yard any carriage less open to the weather: useless heroism is mere braggadocio."

The yard, half filled up with snow which men with brooms and shovels were trying in vain to throw back into the corners, presented a very curious sight. It was filled with telegas, tarantasses, and drojkis, the poles and shafts of which rose in the air like the yards and masts of half-sunken ships. Beyond these primitive vehicles we discovered through the innumerable white flakes that whirled in the blast of the gale, something like the back of a whale cast ashore in the foam; it was the leather hood of an old barouche which in spite of its worn-out appearance we hailed as an ark of safety. The other vehicles were drawn aside; the barouche was pulled into the centre of the yard and we ascertained that the wheels were in good condition, the springs fairly solid, and that if the windows did not close very tight, at least none were lacking. It is true that we should not have presented a very fine appearance in such a trap in the Bois de Boulogne, but we did not propose to drive round the lake and to excite the ad-

miration of the ladies. We were very glad to hire it to take us to the Prussian frontier.

It took but a few moments to transfer our trunks and ourselves to this concern and we were off at the same rate as before, — somewhat more slowly, however, on account of the violence of the wind which drove before it clouds of icy snow. Although we kept every window closed there was soon a ridge of snow upon the empty seat. Nothing is sufficiently close to keep out that impalpable white powder, crushed and sifted by the gale; it makes its way through the least fissures like the sand of the Sahara, and even into the case of a watch. But as neither of us was a sybarite grumbling at a crumpled rose leaf, we enjoyed with deep delight the relative comfort: we could at least lean our backs and our heads against the old green cloth lining, not very well stuffed it is true, but infinitely preferable to the rope of the telega. If we dropped off to sleep we no longer ran the risk of falling and breaking our necks.

We turned the situation to account to snatch a little sleep, each in one corner, but without allowing ourselves to slumber too soundly, for this is occasionally dangerous in a very low temperature, the thermometer having fallen nearly to zero under the influence of the icy snow.

But little by little the gale died down, the flakes of snow suspended in the air fell to the ground, and we could see the country, white all over as far as the eye could reach.

The weather became much milder. We traversed the Vilia, which flows into the Niemen near Kovno, by means of a ferry which was adjusted to the level of the low banks of the river, and we reached the city, which looked well under the fresh fallen snow. The post-house stood on a handsome square, surrounded by regular buildings and planted with trees which at that moment resembled constellations of quicksilver. Onion and pine-apple shaped steeples rose here and there above the houses, but I had neither time nor courage to visit the churches they indicated.

After a slight meal of sandwiches and tea we had horses put to the barouche in order to traverse the Niemen by daylight, for the days are not very long in the month of February in this latitude. Several vehicles, telegas and carts, were traversing the river at the same time; and when we were half way across the yellow, turbulent water almost reached up to the beams which formed the gunwale of the boats; they yielded to the pressure and came up again as the teams progressed towards the other bank. If any horse had

taken fright it would have been the easiest thing in the world to be upset in the current with all our belongings; but Russian horses although very spirited, are very gentle and do not take fright for so small a matter.

A few moments later we were galloping towards the Prussian frontier, which we expected to reach during the course of the night in spite of the groans and the clatter of iron work of our poor barouche, heavily jolted but which nevertheless kept together and did not faithlessly drop us on the road.

Towards eleven o'clock we reached the first Prussian outpost, from where we were to send back the carriage to the relay where we had obtained it.

"Now," said my companion, "that we no longer have to perform acrobatic exercises upon awful carts, it would be wise to sup quietly and to get our complexions up again, so as not to look like spectres when we reach Paris."

It may easily be believed that I made no objection to this brief but substantial discourse, which so accurately interpreted my own thoughts.

When I was a small boy I used to fancy that the frontiers of countries were marked on the ground with a blue, red or green tint, as on maps. It was a foolish

and childish notion, but although the line of demarcation is not drawn with a brush, it is none the less abrupt and distinct; at a spot indicated by a white post, with diagonal stripes, Russia ended and Prussia began in sudden and complete fashion. The neighbouring country did not run into it nor it into the other.

We were shown into a low room provided with a great China stove that roared harmoniously; the floor was strewn with yellow sand; a few framed engravings adorned the walls; the tables and chairs were of German shapes; and the table was laid by tall buxom maids. It was long since we had seen women employed in these domestic matters which seem to belong more to their sex; in Russia and the East it is men who wait upon you, at least in public.

The cookery was different; — beer soup, veal with currants, hare with red currant jelly, and sentimental German pastry took the place of chtchi, caviare, ogourtsi, grouse, soudaks; everything was different, the shape of the glasses, the knives, the forks, innumerable trifles which it would take too long to enumerate, proved constantly that we had passed into another country. We washed down the copious meal with a bottle of Rüdesheimer poured into roemers of an em-

erald colour and claret that proved excellent in spite of its pompous etiquette, printed with ink that had a metallic reflection.

While dining I exerted myself to moderate my mad voracity, in order not to die of indigestion as do shipwrecked people picked up from the raft on which they have consumed, having exhausted their scanty score of biscuit, the leather tops of their shoes and the elastics of their braces. If I had been wise I would have taken only a cup of broth and a biscuit dipped in Malaga wine, so to accustom myself somewhat to food; but let us hope my supper will not give me any trouble.

Costumes had changed. At Kovno we had seen the last tulupes and the faces were no more alike than the clothes. Instead of the vague, pensive look of the Russians, we now beheld the stiff, methodical, formal look of the Prussians, who are a very different race. Little low caps, with visors well down on their foreheads; short tunics, trousers tied at the knees and full on the legs, porcelain or meerschaum pipes or else an amber cigar-holder curiously angular, in which the cigar sticks straight up. In this guise did the Prussians appear to me at the first post; I was not surprised for I was already acquainted with them.

The carriage into which we got was like those small busses used in country houses to fetch from the railway station the Parisian guests expected to dinner. It was comfortably upholstered; the windows closed tight, and it was hung on good springs, at least it appeared to us to be so, after the telega trip we had just finished and which fairly represents the torture of the strappado in use in the Middle Ages. But what a difference there was between the mad speed of the little Russian horses and the phlegmatic trot of the great, heavy Mecklenburg steeds that seemed to go to sleep as they travelled and which were scarcely awakened by the caressing touch of the whip nonchalantly applied to their fat quarters. German horses are no doubt acquainted with the Italian proverb: "*Chi va piano va sano.*" They turn it over in their mind as they raise their big hoofs, but drop the second half: "*Chi va sano va lontano,*" for Prussian relays are much closer to each other than Russian.

All the same, even though we did not go fast, we did get along and morning found us not far from Koenigsberg, on a road bordered by great trees and which stretched as far as we could see. It had a really fairy-like appearance; the snow had frozen on the

branches of the trees, and outlined the smallest twigs with diamond crystals of extraordinary brilliancy, making the avenue look like an immense archway of silver filigree, leading to the enchanted castle of a Northern fay. The snow, it will be seen, knowing the love I felt for it, was lavishing its wonders upon me at the moment of leaving us, and regaling me with its brilliant spectacle. Winter was accompanying us as far as it could and found it difficult to leave us.

Koenigsberg is not a very gay city, at least at this time of year; the winter is very severe and the windows still had on their double sashes. I noticed several houses with crow-foot gables, the façades painted pale green, and blazing with richly ornamented S's as at Lübeck. Koenigsberg is the native city of Kant, who brought back philosophy to its real essence by his "Criticism of Pure Reason." I fancied I could see him at every street corner, in his iron-gray coat, his three-cornered hat, and his shoes with buckles, and I thought of the disturbance of his meditations, due to the absence of a slender poplar which had been cut down, and on which for more than twenty years he had been accustomed to gaze while sunk in his deep metaphysical reveries.

HOMEWARD BOUND

We went straight to the station and each secured a corner in the carriage. We went at one stretch to Cologne, where first we got rid of the snow. There, as the trains did not connect, we were obliged to make a short stay, which we turned to account to regain something of the human aspect, for we looked like Samoyedes who had come to exhibit reindeer on the Neva. The rapidity of our telega trip had produced a curious variety of damage in our trunks:—the blacking of our boots had rubbed off and the bare leather showed; a box of excellent cigars was reduced to a state of powder; the seals of letters entrusted to us had been broken away; several of the envelopes had opened, and there was even snow between my shirts. Having put these matters in order we went to bed after an excellent supper. The next day, five days after leaving St. Petersburg, I reached Paris, at nine in the evening, fulfilling my formal promise. We were only five minutes late. A coupé was waiting for me at the station and a quarter of an hour later I was among old friends and pretty women, in front of a table blazing with light, on which smoked a delicate supper; and my return was joyously celebrated until the dawn.

TRAVELS IN RUSSIA

PART II — SUMMER IN RUSSIA

THE VOLGA FROM TVER TO NIJNI-NOVGOROD

AFTER my long stay in Russia I found it somewhat difficult to fall in again with Parisian ways; my thoughts often returned to the banks of the Neva, and fluttered around the cupolas of Vassily Blajenny. I had seen the Empire of the Czars in winter only, and I wished to traverse it in summer, on those long days when the sun sets for but a few minutes. I was acquainted with St. Petersburg and Moscow but I knew nothing of Nijni-Novgorod, and how was it possible to live without having seen Nijni-Novgorod?

How comes it that the names of certain cities irresistibly master your imagination and murmur in your ears for years, with a mysterious harmony like musical phrases

caught by chance and which one cannot get rid of? The strange haunting is well known to all those whom an apparently sudden resolve drives from their country to the most unexpected places. The demon of travelling whispers syllables of incantation while you work or read, while you are happy or sorrowful, until you are compelled to obey. The wisest plan is to resist the temptation as little as possible, the sooner to be rid of it; once you have inwardly consented you need not trouble any more: let the spirit that suggests the thought do the rest; under its magic influences obstacles vanish, ties are loosened, leave is granted, and money, which could not be obtained for the most honourable and the legitimate needs, comes to you delighted and ready to serve as a viaticum. The passport goes of itself to be covered with stamps at the legations and embassies; your clothes pack themselves in your trunk, and it turns out that you happen to have a dozen brand new shirts, a new suit of blacks and an overcoat fit to resist the most varied freaks of weather.

Nijni-Novgorod had long cast that irresistible spell upon me. No melody sounded so delightfully in my ears as its dim, distant name; I repeated it unconsciously like a litany, with a feeling of individual pleasure; its

configuration took my fancy as if it were an arabesque of curious design. The collocation of the "i" and the "j," the alliteration produced by the final "i," the three dots marking the word like notes to be lengthened, — charmed me in a way that was at once puerile and cabalistic. The "v" and the "g" of the second half of the name, also had their peculiar attraction, while the "od" had about it an imperious, decisive and conclusive air which made any objection impossible. So after a few months' struggle I felt I must go.

A genuinely plausible motive, the necessity of going to Russia to collect materials for a great work on the treasures of art of that country, a work on which I had been engaged for several years, had brought me already, without too much improbability in the opinion of sensible people, to that original and singular city of Moscow, which I had formerly seen crowned by winter with a silver diadem, and its shoulders covered with a mantle of snowy ermine. That was three-quarters of the way. With a farther stretch to the East I should attain my end. The demon of travel had arranged things in the most natural manner possible: in order that nothing should keep me back it

had sent abroad or else to their estates, the people whom I ought to have seen; so there was no obstacle, no pretext, no remorse to prevent my satisfying my desire. I collected my materials in haste, but while I was visiting the marvels of the Kremlin, the name of Nijni-Novgorod, traced by the tempter's finger, shone in capricious Slavonic characters, mingled with flowers upon a dazzling background of gold plate and Ikonostases.

The simplest and shortest way was to take the line of railway which goes from Moscow to Vladimir, and then to post to Nijni; but the fear of not obtaining horses, for it was the time of the famous fair which collects in the city three or four hundred thousand people of all countries, made me prefer the roundabout way so rarely chosen to-day. The Anglo-American maxim: "Time is money," is far from being mine, and I am not a tourist always in a hurry to reach his destination. Travelling in itself is what most interests me.

Contrary to middle class wisdom I began by retrograding as far as Tver, in order to take the Volga almost at its source, where I would entrust myself to its peaceful current, and thus be carried indolently to my destination. So little eagerness after such lively

desire may perhaps surprise my reader, but as I was now sure of seeing Nijni-Novgorod I was no longer in a hurry. No doubt the vague apprehension "which makes man fear the fulfilment of his wish," influenced me unconsciously and moderated my impatience. Would the city I had dreamed of vanish at my approach at the breath of reality like unto the banks of clouds on the horizon which assume the form of domes, towers, necropolis, and which a breath of wind changes or sweeps away?

Too faithful to the motto of railways: *linea recta brevissima*, the rigid railway from St. Petersburg to Moscow leaves Tver on one side and I had to reach it in one of the fast drojkis which in Russia never fail the traveller, and seem to spring from below ground at the call of his desire.

The Hôtel de la Poste, where I put up, is as large as a palace. It might be a caravansary for whole migrating tribes. Waiters dressed in black, with white cravats, received me and led me with English formality to a vast room in which a Parisian architect would easily have found space for a whole apartment. We traversed a corridor the length of which recalled the monastic passages of the Escorial. In the dining room

a thousand guests might have been seated in comfort. While despatching my dinner in the recess of a window, I read on the corner of my napkin the hyperbolic and fabulous number, "three thousand two hundred!" Yet, but for the laughter, the bursts of talk, the rattling of sabres of a few young officers seated in a neighbouring room, the hotel appeared to be absolutely deserted. Great dogs, as weary-looking as those of Aix-la-Chapelle, of which Heinrich Heine speaks, were wandering in melancholy fashion through it as through a street, in quest of a bone or a caress. As they arrived from the distant kitchens the tired out waiters placed upon the table with a sigh, the half-cold dishes.

From the balcony I viewed the great square of Tver from which radiate many streets. In one corner an acrobat's show exhibited its sign and sent out its shrill music, which idlers, no matter to what country they may belong, can scarcely resist. In the distance, right opposite me, the dome and the bulbous belfries of a church, with gilded crosses and chains, stood out against the sky; the sides of the square were lined with the façades of handsome houses. Private troikas passed swiftly, drawn by thoroughbred horses; public carriages stood in line, and moujiks already wearing their

tulupes, were settling themselves to sleep at the foot of the stairs.

The long days when the sun merely disappears to reappear a minute later, almost mingling its setting and dawn, were already past, but night did not fall before ten or eleven in the evening. It is difficult for Westerners to imagine the colouring of the sky during that long twilight; the palettes of our painters are not prepared for it; Delacroix, Diaz, and Ziem, would be amazed at it and wonder by what bold combinations they might succeed in reproducing it; if they did so their paintings would be charged with exaggeration. One feels as if one were in a different planet and that light came refracted through the prism of a different atmosphere. Shades of turquoise and apple-green melt into rose-coloured bands, which turn pale lilac, mother-of-pearl, steel blue, with inexpressibly delicate gradations. Or again it has a milky, opaline, iridescent whiteness such as we imagine to be that of the immaterial light of Elysium, which is produced neither by the sun, by the moon, nor the stars, but by an ether luminous in itself and yet veiled.

Against this fairy sky, as if to bring out more strongly the ideally tender tints of it, passed flocks of

crows and ravens, returning to their nests, performing evolutions regulated by a sort of strange ceremonial and accompanied by croaks to which it is difficult not to attribute a mysterious meaning. These hoarse calls, broken by sudden silence and varied by choral outbursts, seem to be a sort of hymn or prayer to night. The pigeons, which are respected in Russia as being the symbol of the Holy Ghost, had already gone to roost, and lined all the mouldings and projections of the church. There are incredible numbers of them and the faithful piously scatter seed for them.

I went down to the square on my way to the river, without a guide and without any indications, trusting to that instinct of the topography of cities which rarely fails an old traveller. Taking the street which cut at right angles the beautiful street of Tver, I soon reached the banks of the Volga. The main street tried to resemble a St. Petersburg Prospect, but it was less frequented, and being farther from the centre had preserved the genuine Russian characteristics: — it was lined on either side by fences of painted boards and wooden houses painted in diverse colours and surmounted by green roofs. Above these rose the tops of trees of a rich, fresh green. Through the panes of

the low windows I got a glimpse of the hot-house plants which are intended to make the dwellers forget the whiteness of the six months' winter. A few women were returning from the river, barefooted, carrying bundles of linen on their heads. Peasants in telegas urged on the little wild-maned horses, as they brought back wood from the wood-yards along the shore.

At the foot of the bank, which is pretty steep but which the drojkis and carts ascend at a pace that would terrify Parisian drivers and horses, showed the funnels of the steamers forming the flotilla of the Samolett Company. As the river is not very deep here, it is impossible to use vessels of much draft. Having secured my berth, for the steamer was to leave very early in the morning, I continued my walk along the river bank. The brown water reflected, as in a dark mirror, the splendours of the twilight, adding to their magnificent intensity and vigour. The opposite bank, bathed in shadow, projected like a long cape into an ocean of light, for it was difficult to distinguish between heaven and water. Two or three little boats, working their oars as a drowning insect wiggles its legs, rayed here and there the sombre and clear mirror; they seemed to float in a vague fluid, and at times I

could not help fearing that they would be wrecked on the inverted reflection of a dome or a house.

Farther on a dark line cut the river at its surface, like the causeway of an isthmus; on drawing nearer I perceived it was a long raft which bridged the two shores; a portion of it could be swung open at will to allow vessels to pass. It was a bridge reduced to its simplest expression. The severe frosts, the floods and ice shoves make it difficult to use standing bridges on Russian rivers, for such constructions are almost always carried away. On the edge of the raft women were washing linen; not satisfied with using their hands to clean it they trampled it after the Arab fashion: the striking fact made my thoughts suddenly swerve to the Moorish vapour baths of Algiers, where I remember seeing young *idoulets* dancing in soapsuds upon the bathing towels. The quay, from which there is a beautiful view, serves as a promenade. Crinolines worthy, as far as their size went, of figuring on the Boulevard des Italiens, spread out luxuriously, and little girls walked three or four yards from their mothers, — the circumference of the skirts not permitting them to approach nearer, — in short dresses with hoop skirts that resemble the hooped kilts of the

dancers of the days of Louis XIV. When a moujik, in stuff smock-frock, esparto sandals on his feet, dressed about as was the peasant of the Danube before the Roman Senate, passed near these fashionable dresses, I could not help being startled by the sudden contrast: nowhere do extreme civilisation and primitive barbarism elbow each other in more marked fashion.

It was time for me to go back to the hotel and to imitate the crows. The glow of the sky was slowly fading out; a transparent obscurity enveloped all things, destroying the modelling without effacing them, as in that marvellous vignette in Gustave Doré's illustrations of Dante, in which the artist has so admirably rendered the poetry of twilight. Before going to bed I leaned for a moment from my balcony, lighted a cigar, for in Russia it is forbidden to smoke on the streets (a prohibition since removed), and gazed at the magnificent sky, the intensely brilliant scintillation of which reminded me of the Eastern heavens. Never had I seen in the blue night such a swarm of stars; the void was full of them, at unmeasured depths; it was like a dust of suns. The silvery meanderings of the Milky Way showed with startling clearness; and the glance might readily believe that it could make out in that

flood of cosmic matter the stellar explosions of new worlds, while the nebulæ seemed to endeavour to resolve and condense themselves into stars. Dazzled by the sublime spectacle which I was perhaps contemplating alone at the time, for man uses very moderately the privilege which, according to Ovid, has been granted him, of bearing his head high and gazing at the heavens, I let the dark hours fly by without thinking that I had to be up by dawn. Finally I returned to my room.

Notwithstanding the wealth of linen which the formidable number on my napkin had indicated, there was but a single sheet on my bed, no larger than a small tablecloth, and which the agitation of the least dream was bound to cause to fall off. I am not of those who are constantly breathing out elegies about the discomforts of travel, so I rolled myself philosophically in my pelisse and laid down upon one of the broad leather sofas found everywhere in Russia, the comfort of which explains and makes up for the insufficiency of the beds. It had the further advantage that I should not have to dress with the somnambulistic gestures and the sleepy hurry that are to be reckoned among the most unpleasant incidents of travel.

As soon as I appeared at the hotel door a drojki dashed towards me at full speed, followed by several others which tried to pass it; Russian drivers rarely miss an opportunity of indulging in that kind of performance. As they come up at almost the same time, they fight for a customer, disputing with amusing volubility but without violence or brutality; the traveller having picked out one, the others go off at a gallop and disperse in every direction.

A few minutes sufficed to bring my trunk and myself to the bank of the Volga. A boarded slope led to the landing place, near which the little steamer "Nixie," was getting up steam, with jets of white smoke, impatient to be off. The late comers, followed by their luggage, and dragging their carpet bags along, hastily traversed the gangway which was about to be withdrawn; the bell sounded for the last time and "The Nixie," turning its paddles gracefully, slid down the stream.

At Tver the Volga is yet far from having the great breadth which, when it is about to flow into the Caspian Sea, makes it resemble the mighty rivers of America. Sure of its future grandeur it begins its course modestly, without swelling its waves or casting

mad foam, and flows between two rather flat banks. The colour of the water surprises one when examined, the shimmer of the light, the reflection of the sky, and of objects being allowed for: it is brown and resembles strong tea. No doubt the Volga owes this colour to the nature of the sand which it holds in suspension and is constantly displacing, for it changes its tint with as much inconstancy as the Loire, a fact which makes the navigation of the stream if not perilous, at least difficult, especially at this part of its course, and at a time of year when the water is low. The Rhine is green, the Rhone blue and the Volga brown; the first two seem to wear the colours of the seas to which they are travelling: does that analogy hold good for the Volga? I do not know, for I have not yet been able to behold the Caspian Sea, that vast puddle of water forgotten in the centre of the land by the withdrawal of the primitive ocean.

Meanwhile "The Nixie" proceeded peacefully, leaving behind it a wake of foam like beer froth, so I turned the time to advantage by casting a glance at our travelling companions. Let us gaze, without fearing to be improper, at the limit, not much respected for the matter of that, which separates the first class from

the second and third. Well-bred people are the same in every country, and if in their more intimate manners they offer differences noticeable by the observer, they do not present marked characteristics which the quickly travelling tourist may note with his pencil upon his note-book.

In Russia there has not been hitherto any intermediate class. No doubt one will soon be formed, thanks to the new institutions, but they are too recent to have produced any visible effect as yet, and the general aspect still remains the same. The nobleman and the tchinovnik (functionary) are equally distinguished by their dress or uniforms from the common people. The merchant preserves his Asiatic caftan and his long beard; the moujik his pink shirt which forms a blouse, his full trousers stuck into the tops of his boots, and, if the temperature sinks, his greasy tulupe, for the Russians, no matter to what class they belong, are usually very sensitive to cold, although in the West we fancy they brave, without feeling it, the most rigorous temperature.

This part of the deck was encumbered with trunks and bundles, and it was impossible to pass along it without stepping over the sleepers; the Russians, like Eastern peoples, lie down wherever they happen to be;

a bench, a board, a step, a box, a coil of ropes, anything will answer the purpose; they are often satisfied if they can lean againt a wall, and manage to sleep in the most inconvenient attitudes.

The installation of the third class on board "The Nixie" reminded me of the decks of a steamer in the ports of the Levant, when Turkish passengers are being taken on board. Every one was in his own corner, in the centre of his luggage and his provisions, and families were grouped together, for there were both women and children. They looked like a tribe floating away. Some of them wore a long blue or green robe fastened with three buttons on the side and drawn in at the waist with a narrow belt; these were the most elegant and richest. Others had red shirts, brown felt smock-frocks, or sheepskin tunics, although the thermometer was up to seventy. As for the women their costume consisted of a cotton gown, of a sort of jersey jacket coming down half way to their knees, and of a coloured kerchief thrown over the head and tied under the chin. The youngest wore shoes and stockings, but the old women, disdainful of this concession to Western fashions, had put on their feet big boots greased with tallow.

In order to give a right tone to this sketch it would need to be dirty, soiled, glazed with bitumen, scratched, and scaly, for the costumes I have tried to depict are old, dirty, worn out and ragged; the owners wear them night and day and leave them only when they are left by them. The relatively high price explains this constancy. Nevertheless, these moujiks, apparently so neglectful of their dress, go to the vapour baths once a week, and what is below the clothes is cleaner than the clothes themselves; besides, it would be imprudent to trust to appearances. I was often shown one of the dirtiest and most ragged of these people, while my friend whispered in my ear: "You would give that man a kopeck if he held out his hand. Well he owns more than a hundred thousand rubles in silver." Although this was told me in the most serious manner, and with the admiring respect which the statement of a large sum of money always inspires, I found it difficult to believe in the fortunes of these ragged Rothschilds and Pereires, with boots down at heel. The faces have nothing very characteristic about them, though occasionally the pale gold of the hair, the straw colour of the beard, the steel gray eyes, plainly indicate a Northern race. The summer sun had put a yellow

mask upon the faces and made them of almost the same shade as that of the hair and the beard. The women were scarcely pretty, but their gentle, resigned plainness was in no wise disagreeable; their faint smile allowed one to see handsome teeth, and their eyes, though somewhat wrinkled, did not lack for expression; in the poses they assumed as they settled on the benches, a vestige of feminine grace revealed itself under their heavy garments.

Meanwhile "The Nixie" was proceeding onwards with ever-watchful prudence; in order that the pilot might see the river afar and note obstacles, the wheel was placed on the bridge connecting the two paddle-wheel boxes; he worked the rudder by a system of chains that transmitted the impulsion. In the bows, leadsmen, armed with graduated poles, were constantly calling out the depth of water with a rhythmic cry. Buoys painted red and white, poles, branches of trees planted in the river bed, marked out the navigable channel, and it really required extraordinary familiarity with this mode of navigation to make one's way through these capricious meanderings. In certain places the sand almost came to the surface, and "The Nixie" more than once scraped the gravel; but a more rapid

turning of the wheels bore her away and carried her into the current without its being once necessary to have recourse — a humiliating thing to do — to the salvors who, standing on flat boards and leaning on long boat hooks, await vessels endangered as they pass over the shallows. The real peril would be to strike some of those great boulders which are strewn here and there in the Volga mud, and which are hauled up and placed on the bank when an accident has revealed their presence. Sometimes they rip up vessels and the cargo goes to the bottom.

The banks, the gullied liassic soil of which testifies to the rise of the river when the snows melt, are not picturesque, at least in this part. They form a series of undulations that run one into another without sudden breaks, without characteristic changes. Sometimes a fir wood breaks the long yellow bands with its dark verdure, or else the horizontal line is interrupted by the angles of the roofs of the log-houses of a village. There is always in every village a church with white-washed walls and green dome.

Every time "The Nixie" passed a building devoted to worship I could tell it even if my back was turned, by the bowing of the heads, the swinging of the bodies

and the signs of the cross made by the moujiks, the women of the lower class, and the sailors; one of them, indeed, I used as an indicator: possessed of remarkable sight he could make out on the extreme horizon the most imperceptible steeple and crossed himself with automatic precision and rapidity. Then I pulled out my glass, getting ready to look at the church or monastery when it came within reach. In the West piety itself is sober in its demonstrations, religious feeling keeps within the soul, and these external practices amaze the stranger; yet is it not quite the thing to bow to the House of God?

The traffic on the Volga was very animated and the interesting sight kept me for long hours leaning against the bulwarks of "The Nixie." Boats were going down the river, spreading vast sails set on tall masts, to draw the faintest breath of air. Others were ascending, drawn by tow horses, which have neither the size nor the strength of our robust draft horses, but numbers make up for vigour. Each team was usually composed of nine animals, and at regular distances relays installed upon some sandy plain formed camps in which Swertzkov, the Russian Horace Vernet, would have found admirable suggestions for pictures.

A few crafts of lesser tonnage were being poled up; a hard task it is for the boatmen to walk constantly along the rail, leaning upon a pole with all their strength; these poor people do not live long; I am told that they rarely attain more than forty years of age. Some of the boats are very large although of shallow draft; an apple green band sometimes brightens the silvery gray tint of the pine of which they are built; in the bow are frequently seen huge, painted, wide open eyes, or else the Russian eagle roughly daubed, curving its two necks and displaying its black wings. Ornaments carved with an axe, with an accuracy that the chisel could not surpass, adorn the poop. Most of those craft carry enormously valuable cargoes of corn. The steamers of the Samolett Company and those of a rival company would meet us and on each craft the ensign was set with scrupulous nautical politeness. I must note also the canoes dug out of tree-trunks like Indian canoes, which came alongside in spite of the turmoil made by the paddle wheels, threw on board letters from the small places where "The Nixie" did not put in, and caught flying the mail bag thrown to them.

There was a continual going and coming of passengers on board "The Nixie," at every stopping place

some landed or came on board; the stops were sometimes quite long; wood was taken on to feed the fires, for coal is not used by reason of its being scarce and expensive. The long piles of firewood arranged along the banks have led the old retrograde peasants to say that if the railways and steamers go on as they are doing people will soon have to die of cold in holy Russia.

These landing places, all built on the same plan, consist of a square pontoon supporting two rooms built of wood, the one serving as an office, the other as a store-room and waiting-room, the two separated by a broad passage intended for the travellers and the luggage. As the height of the water varies, a wooden bridge, sloping more or less steeply, joins the landing float to the bank. On the sides of the bridge the numerous small traders attracted by the passage of the steamer, arrange their frail stalls and are grouped in picturesque fashion. Little girls offer you baskets containing five or six apples of an acid green, or little cakes on which are printed with moulds, as is done with butter pats among us, amusingly barbarous figures; among them imaginary lions which if they were cast in bronze and covered with an archaic

patina, might pass for specimens of Ninevite art. Women carrying a pail of water and a glass, sell kwas, a sort of drink made of rye and aromatic herbs, the taste of which is very pleasant when one has got used to it; as the price is very low well-bred people disdain it and common people alone drink it. These women have a peculiarity in their costumes which is worth noting. The Empire fashion placed the waist under the breasts, and our eyes, accustomed to long waists, are struck by this eccentricity when seeing portraits of that day, even though they are painted with Gérard's skill or Prud'hon's grace. The Russian peasant women put their waists above their breasts, so that they appear to be buried in a bag up to the armpits. It is easy to imagine the most ungracious effect of this constant depression, which ends by flattening the firmest bosoms. —The rest of the costume consists of a chemise with full sleeves, and a pointed kerchief knotted under the chin.

There were also shops selling white and rye bread, the former very white, the other very brown, but the most paying business was that of ogourtsis, a sort of cucumber which is eaten fresh in summer and pickled in winter, and without which it seems the Russians are

[illegible] to get along, they are served at every meal, they form the inevitable accompaniment of every dish, slices of them being eaten as in other countries one eats a piece of orange. This dainty struck me as insipid. It is true that the Russians, for some hygienic reason which I am not acquainted with, do not salt their dishes at all: they like unsalted things.

There is no use in my transcribing in French letters from the itinerary of the Samolett Company, the frequently complicated names of the small places at which we stopped; they almost always looked alike; steps formed of logs or boards leading down to the river from the crest of the bank, a Gostiny Dvor, a Government House and the richest dwellings of the place, the [illegible] of their windows painted white on an olive or red ground; a church with four belfries around its dome, sometimes painted green, sometimes showing their [illegible] of hammered copper or tin; the long [illegible] enclosure, covered with frescoes in [illegible] taste of Mount Athos; and further off [illegible] at the corners. Add, by [illegible] the picture, a few drojkis awaiting [illegible] few idlers whose interest in the arrival [illegible] lis.

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Kimra, however, had an air of festivity which surprised me. Pretty nearly the whole population was spread out from the bank of the river to the top of the ridge. A report had spread that the Grand Duke, the heir apparent to the throne, was on his way to Nijni-Novgorod on board "The Nixie." It was not so, for the Grand Duke passed later, on another vessel; but I profited without any scruples by the crowd which his presence had drawn, in order to note this collection of types. A few elegant toilettes affecting French fashions — allowing for the inevitable differences in time due to the distance between Paris and Kimra, stood out against the national background of sack-like skirts and old-fashioned French prints. Three young girls wearing little Andalusian hats, zouave jackets, and swelling crinolines were positively charming, in spite of a certain affectation of Western freedom; they laughed together and seemed to disdain the wealth of boots displayed by the other inhabitants, both men and women; for Kimra is as famous for its boots as Ronda is for its gaiters.

The shallowness of the river, and the necessity of picking up buoys, did not allow of navigation by night, so "The Nixie," blowing off steam and casting anchor,

stopped as soon as the last breath of the fresh wind died away with sunset. In the evening tea was served to every passenger and the samovars, vigorously heated, poured incessantly their boiling water upon the concentrated infusion. To me it was a curious sight to see people of the lowest classes, in appearance comparable to beggars in our own land, enjoying that delicate perfumed drink which is even yet a refinement with us and which dainty hands pour out for the guests in our drawing-rooms. The Russian way of drinking tea is first to cool it for a moment in the saucer, then to swallow it while holding between the teeth a small piece of sugar, which sweetens the drink sufficiently for the Russian taste, which in this respect is not unlike the Chinese.

When I awoke, upon the narrow divan of the cabin, "The Nixie" had started again; day was dawning; we were running past a bank, the crest of which was topped by the isbas of a village reflected in the waters of the stream, which was as smooth as a mirror.

We stopped at Pokrovski, a monastery of the sixteenth century, crenelated like a fortress. Most of the passengers landed for the purpose of praying in the church, and imploring the blessing of Heaven upon

their trip. In the penumbra of a mysterious chapel, covered with paintings and shimmering with gold, a pope or monk of Oriental aspect, chanted with an acolyte one of those beautiful melodies of the Greek rite, the effect of which is irresistible even when one does not share the belief which has inspired them. He had a magnificent bass voice, deep, rich, and sweet, and he used it to perfection.

Ouglitch which we passed towards the end of the day, is quite a large town, having no less than thirteen thousand inhabitants; the steeples, domes, and belfries of its thirty-six churches made its silhouette superb. The river, which is broader at this place, looked like the Bosphorus, and it would not have required a great stretch of imagination to transform Ouglitch into a Turkish city and its bulbous steeples into minarets. On the bank was pointed out to me a small building in the old Russian style, in which Dimitri, aged seven, was slain by Boris Godunoff.

At the confluence of the Mologa and the Volga, on sandy banks, innumerable flocks of crows and ravens were indulging in the strange evolutions which precede their going to rest. Gulls, which love great streams, were beginning to show. Higher up I had seen eagles

fishing for their supper some of those sturgeons which Western gourmets would pay for with their weight in gold.

The sunset, flaming with strange tints, had been succeeded by a blue, silvery, ideal moonlight, when we reached Rybinsk; the stream was almost barred by a flotilla of great vessels; through the black web of their spars and rigging sparkled a few lights, and a church spire rose in the night air like a rocket of quicksilver.

Rybinsk is an important commercial city and pleasure resort. The Volga, deepened and broadened by the tribute of the waters of the Mologa, allows large craft to ascend to this port and to start from it; so the sedentary population is augmented at certain seasons by a considerable number of travellers in search of amusement, and who are in excellent and generous temper on account of the profits they have made. One of the favourite amusements of the Russian people is to listen to airs and choruses sung by gypsies; it is impossible to imagine the intense delight taken in these by the hearers — a delight which is equalled only by the excitability of virtuosi. The enthusiasm of dilettanti at the Italian opera can give but a faint idea of it,

for here there is nothing conventional, nothing stimulated, nothing fictitious, and good form is forgotten. It is indeed the deep, barbaric feelings of primitive man which are stirred by those strange sounds.

I am not surprised at this taste for I share it, and as I had been told on the steamer that Rybinsk possessed a famous troupe of gypsies, I had accepted an invitation to pay them a visit, made by an amiable, clever, and cordial nobleman, a passenger on "The Nixie," with whom I would willingly have gone to the ends of the world.

The Count had landed first to arrange matters, telling me the name of the hotel where the concert was to take place. I reached the quay slowly, charmed by the sight of the wondrous night under the sky, the stars in which turned pale in the light of the moon. The stream spread out broad as a lake or an arm of the sea, cut by the dark line of boats. The luminous trail of the orb of night, the fainter reflections of the masts lengthened out on the water like ribbons of silver and black velvet, and the fluid shimmer of the current dentellated its edges. The crests of the green roofed houses on the banks, which were bathed in shadow, were tipped with a bluish light, but a few red

sparks showing here and there, proved that the inhabitants were not yet asleep. Standing on a large open square, the chief church showed like a silver block, with fantastic intensity of brilliancy; it seemed to be lighted with Bengal fires; its dome surrounded by a diadem of pillars, sparkled like a tiara studded with diamonds. Phosphorescent metallic reflections played upon the tin and copper roofs of the belfries, and the steeple, in a style of architecture recalling the Dresden spire, seemed to have spitted two or three stars on its golden finial. It was a supernatural, magical effect such as is seen in an apotheosis in a fairy play, when the blue distance of the perspective reveals, as it opens, the Palace of the Sylph or the Temple of Happy Hymens. The church of Rybinsk thus illumined, seemed to have been carved out of a fragment of the moon fallen to earth; flooded with the beams of the orb of night it shone with the same silvery, snowy light.

Scarcely had I reached the top of the quay, formed of great stones which the Volga upsets and tumbles over in flood time, than through the faint music issuing from the tea-houses, the dread cry of *Karaoul!* (police) struck on my ear, howled and rattled by a

voice that seemed to come from a throat slashed by a knife. I sprang forward; two or three shadowy forms took to flight; an open door was abruptly closed; the lights in the house went out and everything became dark. The silence of death had followed the call of despair. I passed two or three times before that door, but the place had turned black, mute and deaf, like Saltabadil's pot-house in the fifth act of the "Roi s'amuse." I had no means of entering this cut-throat place, for I was alone, a stranger, unarmed, unacquainted with the language, and in a country where no one helps you in case of accident or murder, for fear of the police and of being called as a witness. Besides it was all over; whoever the human being might be that had called so despairingly for help, was now past assistance. So you see my entry to Rybinsk did not lack for dramatic colour, and I regret I cannot relate to you in detail the story of the murder, for the cry I heard was indeed a cry of agony; but I know no more than I have told: shadowy night swallowed up the mystery.

Still much moved I entered a *traktir*, in which the portraits of Emperor Alexander II and Empress Alexandrovna, in superb frames, but painted like tavern

signs, formed companion pictures to the holy images, covered with gold and silver leaf and lighted by the quivering light of a hanging lamp. Tea was served, and while I was enjoying the national beverage, improved by a dash of cognac, a Cremona grinding organ was playing an air of Verdi's in the next room. I was soon joined by the engineer of the Samolett Company, and the chief engineer of "The Nixie;" and we went off together to find the inn where the gypsies were to be and where the Count had arranged to meet us.

The hotel, which belonged to a rich corn merchant whose acquaintance I had made on the boat, was situated at the other end of the town. The farther one went from the bank of the river the larger were the grounds round the houses, which were scattered over greater spaces and separated by long wooden fences. The streets ended in waste places, and plank walks enabled one to cross the mud holes. A few lean dogs sitting on their haunches were baying at the moon, and when we passed near them followed us, either through mistrust or sociability, or perhaps in the hope of being adopted. Under the influence of the moon a light, white mist was rising from the ground and interposing its vaporous gauze between us and the

surrounding objects, which it invested with a poetical life that daylight no doubt deprives them of. At last in the azure mass in which the last houses showed lilac gray, I perceived the red gleam of some lighted windows; that was the place. A light strumming of guitars, sounding in our ears like the obstinate song of a cricket, and the notes of which came sharper and sharper to us, soon led us to the door.

A moujik took us through long passages to a distant room. The Count, the corn merchant, and a young officer formed the audience. On the table, among bottles of champagne and glasses, two long tapers like church candles were stuck in candlesticks; the wicks were surrounded with yellow aureoles of light that scarcely managed to penetrate the thick smoke produced by the cigars and cigarettes. A full glass was held out to me on condition that I should empty it at once, in order that it might be straightway refilled; it was particularly excellent Roederer, such as is to be had in Russia only. Having performed the libation I sat down in mute expectation.

The gypsy women stood or leaned against the wall in indolent Oriental poses, without being in the least troubled by the glances fixed upon them; their attitude

was absolutely inert; their faces expressionless; they seemed exhausted or asleep. These wild natures, when not agitated by passion, sink into an animal calm which it is impossible to describe; they do not think, they merely dream, like the denizens of the forest. No civilized face could attain to their mysterious lack of expression, more excitingly alluring than all the grimaces of coquetry. The coldest and least poetical cannot help wishing they could provoke a flash of desire on those faces, and the wish soon turns into passionate longing.

Were they beautiful, at least, these gypsy women? No, not as one generally understands the word. Our Parisian ladies would unquestionably have thought them ugly, save one who was nearer the European type than her companions. Their complexion was olive, their hair thick and black, their bodies apparently slender, their hands small and brown; their costume had nothing characteristic; they wore neither amber nor glass-ware necklaces, no skirts diapered with stars and fringed with lace, no mantles striped in quaint colours; they were got up in some sort of Parisian fashion with the addition of a few barbarisms justified by the distance. In their flounced skirts, taffeta jackets, crino-

lines and nets, they looked like badly dressed ladies' maids.

So far my reader no doubt thinks the entertainment was not very remarkable, but he must be patient as I was and not despair of the gypsy woman, although she has given up, at least when she comes into the cities, her picturesque rags and ornaments: the thoroughbred should not be seen in the stable when it is blanketed; it is on the turf that action reveals its beauty.

One of the women, as if shaking off her lassitude and her torpor, in response to the obstinate appeals of the guitar played by a tall, scoundrelly looking fellow, at last made up her mind to advance to the centre of the circle. She raised her long eyelids, fringed with black lashes, and at once the room seemed full of light. Between her lips half parted by a faint smile, shone a white gleam. An indistinct murmur like a voice heard in a dream issued from her lips. Thus posed she looked like a somnambulist and appeared unconscious of what she was doing; she saw neither the room nor the spectators; she was transfigured: her features were ennobled and no longer had any trace of vulgarity; her height seemed greater and her mean dress fell in folds like an antique drapery.

Little by little she increased the volume of her voice and sang a melody slow at first, then more rapid, of most intoxicating quaintness. The theme seemed to be a captive bird whose cage is opened; still disbelieving that it is free the bird hops outside of its prison, then goes off, and when it is sure that there is no trap laid for it, it swells out its little throat, straightens itself up, utters a joyous cry and hurriedly flies with beating wings towards the forest where are singing its former companions. Such was the vision which came into my mind as I listened to that air of which no known music can give any idea.

A second gypsy woman joined the first and soon all the voices took up the winged theme, sending out rockets of scales, prolonging trills, embroidering the pauses, sustaining the modulations, making sudden stops and beginning again unexpectedly. They chirped, whistled, twittered, chattered with eager volubility, making a friendly, joyous tumult as if the wild tribe were welcoming the bird escaped from the city. Then the chorus ceased, the voice continued to sing alone of the delights of liberty and solitude, and the refrain marked the last phrase with tremendous energy.

It is very difficult if not impossible, to render in

words a musical effect, but it is at least possible to tell of the dream to which it gives rise. Gypsy songs have a singular power of evocation; they awaken primitive instincts obliterated by social life, remembrances of a former life one has believed vanished forever, and the longing for independence and vagabondage, secretly retained within the heart, awakens again. They fill one with a strange nostalgia for unknown countries which seem to be one's real motherland. Certain melodies sound on the ear like a *Ranz des vaches*, which one feels weakly unable to resist, and the desire seizes one to throw aside the gun, to abandon the post and to swim to the other bank where there is no discipline, no duty, no law, no morality other than caprice. Innumerable brilliant and confused pictures pass before one's eyes: parties encamped in clearings, bivouac fires on which are boiling pans suspended from three poles; striped garments drying on cords, and on one side crouching on the ground, in the centre of a game of tarocs, an old woman spelling out the future from cards, while a young gypsy girl, with swarthy complexion and blue-black hair, dances as she accompanies herself on a tambourine. The foreground vanishes in the dim perspective of vanished ages.

One sees vaguely a distant caravan coming down from the high plateaus, expelled no doubt from its native country on account of its spirit of revolt which can never be curbed; — the white draperies striped with crude red and orange, are blowing in the wind; the copper rings and bracelets glitter on the brown skins and the bars of the sistra emit a rattle of metallic sounds.

Do not suppose that these are simply a poet's reveries; gypsy music acts strongly upon the most prosaic beings, and makes even a Philistine sunk in obesity and routine, sing "tra la!" Nor is this music, as might be supposed, a wild music, a barbaric music; on the contrary, it is the product of a very complex art, different from ours, and those who perform it are genuine virtuosi, although they do not know a single note and are unable to transcribe a single one of the airs they sing so well. The frequent employment of quarter tones at first troubles the ear, but one soon gets accustomed to and finds a strange charm in them. It is a scale of new sonority, of quaint timbres, of shades unknown to the ordinary musical keyboard, which serve to express sentiments beyond the pale of all civilisation. For the gypsies have neither country,

nor religion, nor family, nor morality, nor political faith; they accept no human yoke and elbow society without ever entering it. As they brave or avoid every law, so they do not submit to the pedantic formulæ of harmony and counter-point; free caprice in free nature, the individual enjoying his sensations without remorseful memory of the night before and without care for the morrow. The intoxication of space, the love of change, and as it were the mania of independence, such is the general impression made by gypsy song. The themes resemble the songs of birds, the murmur of leaves, the sighs of æolian harps; the rhythm recalls the distant gallop of the horses of the steppes; they mark the time but they are fleeing.

The prima donna of the troupe was undoubtedly Sacha (diminutive of Alexandra) who had first broken silence and stirred the sleeping enthusiasm of her companions. Now the wild spirit of the music was unloosed and the gypsies were singing no longer for us but for themselves. Sacha's cheeks were flushed with an imperceptible rose, her eyes shone with intermittent flashes. Like Petra Camara she closed her eyelids like a fan, producing alternations of shadow and light. This method of using her eyes, whether

it was natural or of set purpose, was irresistibly seductive.

She approached the table; a glass of champagne was offered her, but she refused it, for gypsy women are temperate. Instead she asked for tea for herself and her friends. The guitar player, who was apparently not afraid of spoiling his voice, was drinking down one glass of brandy after another, in order to work himself up; stamping his feet on the floor and slapping the guitar with the palm of his hand, he kept on singing and dancing, gesturing like the devil and making grimaces by way of grotesque intermede, with a dazzling vivacity. He was the husband, the *rom* of the fair-haired gypsy. Never did a couple conform less strictly to the maxim: "Husband and wife should be alike."

For more than two hours one song followed another with vertiginous volubility, full of caprice, dash, brio; the gypsies performing the most difficult things as if they were toying with them. Sacha indulged in *fioriturі* infinitely more difficult than Rhode's variations, while she took part in the conversation and asked one of my young travelling companions for a dress of *moire antique*, these being the only two French words she

knew. At last the rhythm became so inspiriting, so imperious, that dance was added to song as in an antique chorus; all shared in it, from the old woman, tanned like a mummy, who was rattling her skeleton form, to the little girl of eight, ardent, feverish, matured by sickly precocity, who danced as though she would dislocate her bones, so as not to be behind the grown women. As for the rascal of a guitar player, he fairly vanished in a whirlwind of rapidity, from which sprang arpeggios and shrill calls.

I confess that for one moment I dreaded lest the French "cancan," which is going around the world, had reached Rybinsk and that the evening would end like a play at the Variétés or the Palais-Royal, but it was not so; the dance of the gypsies is like that of the bayaderes. Sacha with her limp arms, the undulation of her torso and her dancing on one spot, recalled Amany and not Rigolboche. She and her companions seemed to be performing the Malapou or Wonder dance on the banks of the Ganges, before the altar of Siwa, the Blue god. Never did the Asiatic origin of gypsies seem to me more evident and more irrefutable.

It was time to return to the steamer, but the spectators and performers were so excited that the concert

continued in the street; the gypsies, taking our arms, walked in separate groups and sang a chorus with echoes, responses, and *decrescendo* effects, followed by sonorous outbursts of magical and supernatural effect; Oberon's horn, even when it is Weber which blows into its ivory shells, gives out no more suave, silvery, velvety, dreamy notes.

When we had crossed the gangway on to the steamer I turned to look back at the shore; on the edge of the quay the gypsies, grouped together in the moonlight, were waving their hands to us; a dazzling shower of notes, the last silver bombshell of these musical fireworks, rose to inaccessible heights, scattered its sparkling light upon the dark background of silence, and died out.

"The Nixie," which was well fitted to navigate the upper Volga, was not of sufficiently heavy tonnage to descend the river, — here very much wider and deeper, — with an increased number of passengers and a larger cargo. So we had been transshipped to the "Provorny," a steamer belonging to the same company, and of five hundred and fifty horse-power. Pails, each marked with one of the letters of the steamer's name, in Russian characters, hung under the bridge. The

deck cabin, forming a sort of kiosk, rose above the deck, above the steps leading to the main saloon, and enabled one to view the prospect whether in sunshine or in bad weather; and there I spent the greater part of my days.

Before the "Provorny" started I cast a glance at Rybinsk, to see how it looked in daylight, — not without some apprehension, for the sun is not as indulgent as the moon: it makes painfully plain what the orb of night softens with its gauze of azure and silver. Well, Rybinsk did not suffer too much from the light; its yellow, rose, and green houses of wood and brick, prettily topped its quay built of great irregular stones like a ruined cyclopean wall; the church, which in the moonlight had seemed to me of snowy whiteness, was painted apple green. I am fond of polychromy in architecture, but all the same that peculiar selection of colour astonished me. The church moreover, did not lack character, with its dome flanked by belfries and its four porticoes orientated like those of St. Isaac's. The steeple had the same queer swelling and narrowing which is noticed in the steeples of Belgium and Germany; but it raised very high its topmost finial, and if it did not satisfy the taste it tickled the eye, while its

silhouette on the horizon was anything but wearisome. The vessels at anchor near Rybinsk were mostly of large size, and of a peculiar form which I shall more than once have occasion to describe, for water traffic between this city, Nijni-Novgorod, Kazan, Saratof, Astrakhan, and other cities on the lower Volga is very considerable at this period of the year. Some were getting under way to descend the stream, others were at anchor or arriving, and the spectacle was altogether most interesting. The "Provorny" skilfully slid out from among this fleet and soon was carried along by the current.

The river was bounded by somewhat higher banks, especially on the left; but the character of the landscape did not change: we still had fir woods, aligning their great trunks like colonnades against the background of sombre verdure; villages of log-huts clustering around a church with a green dome; occasionally a nobleman's seat turned its quaint façade towards the river, or at least, standing sentry-like at the corner of a park, a belvedere or kiosk painted in brilliant colours; board walks climbing up the bank and leading to some dwelling; ground gullied by the rise and fall of the water; sandy beaches on which flocks of geese were

waddling round, and to which herds of oxen and cows came down to drink; endless variations of the same motive which the pencil would make more intelligible than does the pen.

Presently I caught sight of the Romanoff Convent; its crenelated, whitewashed walls make it look like a fortress, and must have protected it in former times against sudden assaults; for the treasures contained within the monasteries excited in times of trouble the cupidity of pillaging hordes. Above the walls arose great cedar trees spreading their branches horizontally covered with sombre, robust foliage. Cedars are cultivated with particular care at Romanoff, for it was under a cedar that the miraculous image venerated there was found.

At Yourevetz the wood for the fires was brought on board by women. Two poles arranged like shafts, supported a pile of logs, which were thrown into the bunkers of the steamer by couples of smart, robust peasant women, some of whom were occasionally pretty. The excitement of the work flushed their complexions with the rosy tint of health, and a slight breathlessness which parted their lips gave a glimpse of teeth as white as peeled almonds. Unfortunately the

faces of some of them were marked and pitted with small-pox, for vaccination is not very generally practised in Russia, no doubt owing to some popular prejudice. Their dress was very simple: a chintz skirt, of an old-fashioned pattern such as is to be met with sometimes in old country inns on the bed curtains and coverlets; a coarse linen chemise, a kerchief knotted under the chin, and that was all. The absence of shoes and stockings allowed one to admire fine and well turned ankles: Cinderella's slipper could easily have been put on by some of these barefooted girls. I noted with pleasure that the hideous fashion of fastening the skirt by a tape above the breasts, was indulged in only by the older women and the less pretty; the younger had their waist above their hips, as anatomy, hygiene, and common-sense demand.

It somewhat shocked my French notions of gallantry to see women carrying such heavy loads and doing the works of beasts of burden; but after all, this labour performed by them with an alacrity that dispels the notion of fatigue, brings them in a few kopecks and increases their own comfort and that of their families.

As we proceeded down the river we met a great number of boats like those we had seen anchored at

Rybinsk; they are of shallow draft, but in size little inferior to a merchant three-master. There is a peculiarity in their build which is not met with elsewhere: as in Chinese junks, the bow and stern are turned up; the pilot stands on a sort of platform, provided with a rail, the traceried work of which has been cut out with an axe. On the quarter deck are cabins looking like kiosks, with painted and gilded finials surmounted by vanes. But the most curious thing is the house for the horses; it is composed of two floors, supported by small posts; in the lower one are the stables, in the upper one the windlass itself; between the openings of the posts can be seen the horses harnessed three and three or four and four abreast, pulling on the capstan and winding up the tow cable, which is anchored away ahead in the river bed by a boat manned by eight or ten men. The number of horses thus installed on board of these vessels varies from one hundred to one hundred and fifty. They relieve each other and work, so to speak, watch and watch; while some are working the others are resting and the boat keeps on going, though slowly. The mast of the vessel, of immense height, is formed of four or five fir trunks, bound together, and recalls the

moulded pillars of Gothic cathedrals. The rope shrouds have wooden rounds for ratlins, fastened by cross lashings.

I have described somewhat in detail these great Volga boats and their peculiar fittings for they will ere-long disappear; in the course of a few years the horses will be replaced by tow-boats, the living power by mechanical power; the whole of this picturesque system will appear to be too complicated, slow and costly; everywhere the useful and necessary form will prevail. The men who man these boats wear queer hats; tall and brimless like bushel measures or stove pipes, and one is quite surprised not to see smoke coming out of the top.

These vessels reminded me of the great rafts of wood floating down the Rhine, which carry villages of huts and stores enough to furnish Gargantua's table, and even herds of oxen. The last pilot who was able to take charge of those great rafts died some years ago, and steam navigation has suppressed that barbaric and simple mode of transport.

Yaroslav, where we stopped, is connected with Moscow by a stage coach which deserves to be described. A vehicle, drawn by a drove of little horses, was waiting for travellers at the landing-place. It was

what is called in Russia a tarantass, that is to say, a carriage body placed upon two long bars, which connect the fore and the hind wheels; the flexibility of these bars answers instead of springs. The tarantass has this advantage that in case of a breakdown, it is easily repaired, and it resists the jolting of the worst roads. The carriage body, which is not unlike the old time litters, was hung with leather curtains, and the patients sat down sidewise as in busses. After having considered, with the respect it deserved, this sample of antediluvian carriage building, I ascended the slope of the quay and went into the town. The quay itself which is planted with trees, serves as a promenade, and at certain places is carried over arches which allow the lower streets and the torrents to reach the river.

The view from this point is very fine. Yaroslav lacks the characteristics of the old Russian cities, if anything can be called old in Russia, where lime-wash and paint obstinately conceal every trace of age. The porches of the church are filled with paintings in the archaic style of Mount Athos, but the outlines alone are old: whenever they begin to fade the colours of the flesh and the draperies are renewed, and the haloes are regilded.

Kostroma, where we stopped, offered nothing of importance, nothing noteworthy, at least to a traveller who could merely glance at it. The smaller Russian towns have a strikingly uniform appearance: — they are built in accordance with certain laws and certain needs, against which individual fancy does not even attempt to revolt. The lack or the rarity of stone increases the number of wooden and brick buildings, and architecture cannot, with such materials, attain a beauty interesting to the artist. As for the churches, the Greek ritual imposes upon them its hieratic forms, and they do not present the same variety of style as do our Western churches. Let us therefore return to the Volga, which is also monotonous, but varied in its unity like every great spectacle of Nature.

Innumerable birds, to say nothing of crows and ravens, so common in Russia, are flying across the stream. At every moment the steamer causes clouds of wild ducks to rise from the reeds of an islet or from the sand of a shoal; grebes and teal fly away, skimming over the water; in the heavens gulls, their white bellies and their pearly gray backs showing alternately, are indulging in capricious zigzags; falcons, kestrels, and buzzards are swooping around, watching

for prey; sometimes a fishing eagle darts straight down on some imprudent fish and rises again with vigorous flapping of wings, to perch farther away on the bank.

The long twilight of summer evenings again displayed its magic beauties. Shades of orange, citron, and chrysoprase coloured the sunset sky. On this background of splendour, the bank of the river, like the figures on the golden backgrounds of Byzantine ikons, showed in dark outline its trees, hillocks, houses, and distant churches; little banks of blue-black clouds made fleecy by the wind, scudded across a transverse zone; the sun, half sunk behind the wood which masked it, lighted innumerable spangles in the foliage. The brown waters of the river reflected in a darker tone this wonderful spectacle; sparks made visible by the growing darkness flashed like fire-works through the smoke of the steamer; and in the shadow along the banks shone like glow-worms or shooting stars, the lanterns of the fishermen on their way to haul up their nets.

As the water was very low the pilot did not dare to draw nearer the bank, for the darkness prevented his making out the buoys; so we came to anchor in the centre of the river, which is very wide in this place, so

wide, indeed, that we seemed to be in the centre of a great lake, the curving shores and points of promontories closing in the horizon on all sides.

The next day I spent in that busy idleness which is one of the charms of travelling. As I smoked my cigar I watched the banks of the river, that became more and more distant, for the Volga is here twice or thrice as wide as the Thames at London Bridge. Vessels hauled up by the horses on board, and others under sail, shoved past as they went up or down. The water traffic increased and made it plain that we were drawing near an important centre of trade. But if the day was quiet the evening brought about a most dramatic incident.

Our steamer had stopped for the night opposite a village or small town, the Russian name of which I have forgotten, and had moored alongside of a sort of pontoon made fast to the bank. My attention was soon attracted by loud voices and the tumultuous dialogue of a dispute. On the pontoon itself two men were quarrelling, disputing wildly; from insults they passed to acts; after having exchanged a few blows one of the men seized the other round the waist and quick as thought threw him into the river, splashing

the water almost in my face, for the man fell between the pontoon and the steamer, in a space not more than three to four feet in width. The eddying waters closed over him and I saw nothing reappear. There was a moment of dreadful anxiety, and everybody supposed the poor wretch was drowned, for it was impossible to fish him out from under the hull of the vessel, where no doubt the current had already carried him. Suddenly in the moonlight the water was seen to foam up near the bank and a human form emerged, shook itself and climbed the bank with rapid steps.

The man, who was an excellent swimmer, had dived under the paddle wheels, the box of which touched a neighbouring vessel. He could boast of having had a narrow escape. Meanwhile the would-be murderer instead of fleeing, was talking away with much motion of his arms, going and coming, sitting down on a bench at the door of the house, then rising and beginning all over again. Charles III maintained that the cause of every crime is a woman, and in judicial inquiries always asked: "Who is she?" The philosophical accuracy of this axiom was proved on this occasion: — a trap door opened and from within the pontoon arose a woman, who was probably the cause

of the trouble. Whether she was young and pretty I could not make out at that distance in the faint moonlight; besides a singular oscillation she indulged in prevented my making out her features. Calling to her aid all the saints of the Greek calendar she prostrated herself and rose to prostrate herself again; she performed signs of the cross after the Russian fashion, with amazing velocity, and murmured prayers broken by cries and sobs. It was uncommonly strange; she looked like an Aïssaoua working herself up. The police, fetched by the victim in person, at last arrived and after much discussion two soldiers in gray overcoats led away the culprit. For a short time I was able to follow the silhouette of the prisoner and the soldiers on the crest of the bank, who dared not treat him roughly, for he was a tchinovnik.

The anchor was weighed very early, and as daylight facilitated navigation we were not long in coming in sight of Nijni-Novgorod. It was one of those white, pearly, milky mornings on which objects seem to be veiled in a silver gauze; the sky, colourless, but suffused with veiled sunshine, rested on the gray hills and the waters of the stream, which resembled molten tin. Bonington's water-colours are full of such effects,

which might be believed beyond the powers of painting to reproduce, and which inborn colourists alone can attain.

An immense aggregation of vessels of all kinds covered the Volga, scarce leaving free space in the centre of the current for the passage of ships and steamers. The tall masts formed a sort of forest of lopped pines, their straight lines cutting firmly against the uniformly white background. The cool air of dawn unfolded the brightly coloured pennants and made the gilded vanes creak as they spun around. Some of these vessels laden with flour, were dusted all over with the white stuff, like millers. Others, on the contrary, showed plainly their bows painted green and their salmon-coloured top-sides.

We reached the landing place of the Company without damage or accident. It was quite astonishing to me, for though the river is as broad as an arm of the sea at this point, the water traffic is so great and the crowd of crafts so large that it seemed impossible to make one's way through the maze; but rudders act and vessels slide between one another as smartly as fishes.

Nijni-Novgorod stands upon a rise which, after the endless succession of plains we had traversed, had quite

the effect of a genuine mountain. The slope falls in rapid scarps down to the verdant quay; the abrupt zigzags thus formed are covered with brick ramparts, with a few remains of whitewash showing here and there; these crenelated walls form the boundary of the citadel or Kremlin, to use the local name. A huge, square tower rises on the summit; bulbous steeples with gilded crosses topping the walls, betoken the presence of a church within the fortress, and lower down are scattered the wooden houses on the quay itself. Great red buildings, with windows picked out with white, stretch in long symmetrical lines. The bright tones give brilliancy and vigour to the foreground and prevent the strictly regular architecture from wearying the eye.

At the top of the landing stairs there was a perfect rout of drojkis and telegas, fighting for passengers and luggage. Having managed, not without difficulty in repelling the izvochtchiks who mobbed me, I climbed into a drojki and set off in search of a lodging, a very difficult thing to find at the time of the fair. As I drove along the quay I glanced at the improvised stalls of the venders of loaves, ogourtsis, sausages, smoked fish, cakes, watermelons, apples, and other victuals

favoured by the common people. My carriage soon turned a corner and began climbing the road cut between two vast turfed slopes; for Nijni-Novgorod, as formerly was Oran before the engineers had filled up its picturesque precipices, is divided into two parts by a deep ravine. The walls of the Kremlin and the avenue of trees which forms a public promenade, crown the crest on the left; on the right slope a few houses rise, but they soon tire of escalading the declivity down which they seem to be sliding. After the ascent, which was abridged by the impetuousness of the Russian horses, which appear to be unable to go at a walk, we reached the summit of the plateau, on which extends a great square having in the centre a fountain with a cast-iron basin in most mediocre taste, and a church with green domes, surmounted by gilded crosses.

As I had ordered the man to drive me to the hotel most distant from the fair grounds, believing I should thus more easily obtain a room, he stopped before an inn at the corner of a square that looks towards the Kremlin. After a short delay and some conversation, Smyrnof, the hotel-keeper, condescended to admit me and the moujik carried in my trunk.

The room given me was bright, large and clean; it contained all that is indispensable to civilised travel, save that the bed was provided with but a single sheet, and a single mattress about as thick as a thin biscuit; but in Russia people affect, as regards beds, an Asiatic indifference, which, for the matter of that, I share, and the bed of Hotel Smyrnof was as good as any I could have got elsewhere.

While waiting for breakfast I looked out upon the square, my glance resting by preference upon the fountain, — not to admire its architecture, which as I have already said, is in the poorest possible taste, — but on account of the amusingly popular scenes of which a public fountain necessarily becomes the centre. The water carriers came to fill their barrels; they did so by plunging into the basin small pails at the end of a long stick, which they overset at the mouth of the barrel with remarkable quickness though they did spill about half the contents. There were also military convicts dressed in their gray overcoats, on water fatigue duty, guarded by two soldiers with fixed bayonets; moujiks, who filled wooden vases, broad at the bottom, narrow at the top, for household service. But never a woman did I see, while the German fountains

would have drawn together an assemblage of Gretchens, Nanerls, and Kaetchens gossiping away on the edge of the basin. In Russia women, even of the lowest classes, do not go out much, and it is men who perform most of the domestic functions.

After a plenteous breakfast served by waiters in black coats and white cravats, who were perhaps Mussulmans and whose English dress formed a perfect contrast with their characteristically Tartar faces, I hastened to descend to the fair grounds, situated at the foot of the city, on a sort of beach formed by the confluence of the Oka and the Volga. No guide was necessary to find the place, for everybody was going in that direction.

At the foot of the hill my attention was attracted by a small chapel; on the upper steps were bowing, with a mechanical movement of salutation, resembling that of wooden birds which mechanically raise and drop their heads, frightfully squalid beggars, regular human rags, which the funereal rag-picker had doubtlessly refused, through disgust, to pick up and cast into his basket; a few nuns wearing a tall hood of black velvet and a narrow, close-fitting serge dress, who shook before me an alms-box in which rattled the kopecks of the pre-

vious givers; these nuns are to be found wherever the congregating of the public leads them to hope for a successful quest. Five or six old women, who would have made Panzoust's Sybil appear young and pretty, completed the picture. A great number of small lighted tapers made the silver-gilt plates of the Ikonostas, which was further lighted by lamps, blaze in the interior like a mass of goldsmith work. I found it difficult to make my way into the small building, which was crowded with the faithful who were making the sign of the cross as hard as they could, and swinging like dervishes. A thread of water, no doubt possessing some miraculous property, that dropped into a stone shell placed against the wall like a holy-water vessel, struck me as being the special object of devotion in the place.

Public drojkis and telegas were flying along, making deep ruts in the mud and driving foot-passengers to the edge of the road. Sometimes a more elegant drojki came along, bearing two ladies showily dressed, with widespread crinolines, rouged and painted like idols, smiling to show their teeth and casting to right and left that courtesan glance which is the net with which they catch the unwary. The Nijni-Novgorod fair draws these birds of prey from all the evil places in

Russia and from farther away even; whole cargoes of them come by steamer and a special quarter is reserved for them. The ogre of lust must have its prey of more or less fresh flesh. By one of those contrasts due to chance, that admirable worker of antitheses, the swift drojki often shaved a peaceful cart drawn by a little hairy horse bowing its head under its painted douga, and drawing a whole patriarchal group: the grandfather, the father, and the mother carrying a baby.

On that day — though the others were no doubt good also — the whisky monopoly must have taken in a large amount of cash; a great number of drunkards were staggering along the board walks, or splashing about in the muddy road; some, still more drunk and incapable of walking alone, got along with two friends that served as crutches. The faces of some were livid and those of others bloodshot and apoplectic-looking, according to their temperament or their degree of intoxication. One young fellow, overwhelmed by too frequent libations of vodka, had rolled from the sidewalk on to the sloping beach, through the piles of wood, bales, and heaps of filth; he fell, he got up, he fell again, laughing idiotically and uttering inarticulate cries like a teriaki or a haschachin under the influence

of the drug. His hands full of earth, his face soiled with mud, his clothes torn and stained, he crawled on all fours, sometimes managing to reach the top of the quay, at other times again tumbling down into the river up to his waist, without noting the coldness of the water or being aware of the danger of drowning, which is the most disagreeable of all deaths for a drunkard.

The Russians have a proverb about glasses of whisky: "The first goes in like a post, the second like a falcon, the others flutter in like little birds." The individual whose stumbles I have just described, must have held a whole flock of little birds within his stomach! But it should be remembered it is not the satisfaction of the taste which the moujik expects from the drink, but intoxication and forgetfulness; he drinks glass after glass until he falls as if struck by lightning, and nothing is more frequent than to find on the board walks outstretched bodies that might easily be taken for dead men.

The constantly growing density of the crowd kept me for some time in front of a pretty church in which the German rococo united in quaint fashion with the Byzantine style; on the red background stood out ovae, volutes, foliage, capitals like curly cabbages, draped

brackets, flower-pots and other flamboyant fantasies, picked out in white, the whole business surmounted by bulbous belfries most ornamental in aspect; it was like the roof of a mosque upon a Jesuit church.

Having taken a few steps farther in the midst of a perfectly incredible crowd of people and vehicles, shoved and elbowed as on the Champs-Élysées when there are fireworks, I managed to reach the entrance to the bridge that leads to the fair grounds; to venture upon it was both difficult and perilous, but happily true travellers are like great captains — they go anywhere, not with a flag, but with a glass in their hand.

At the entrance to the bridge rose tall masts laden with banners of all colours, blazoned by some extravagant fancy, like the Venetian standards which are erected for festivals in France. On some of the banners the well-meaning artist had intended, although he had not succeeded, to represent the Emperor and the Empress. Other banners were adorned with the double-headed eagle, St. George brandishing his lance, Chinese dragons, leopards, unicorns, griffins, and the whole menagerie of the old Bestiaires. A light breeze which made them flutter, altered in quaint fashion, as

the folds opened unexpectedly, the images represented upon them.

The bridge over the Oka was a bridge of boats on which were laid beams and board walks. The crowd filled it from one side to the other, and in the centre the carriages dashed along at a speed which nothing moderates in Russia and which does not involve accidents, thanks to the extreme skill of the drivers, who are, besides, helped by the docility of the foot passengers in drawing aside. The sound was as if the car of Capanea were passing over the brazen bridge. Both sides of the river disappeared under the immense multitude of boats and the inextricable maze of rigging. Perched on the high saddles of their little horses the Cossacks charged with the police of the fair, and known from afar by their long lances as they came, rode gravely among the drojkis, telegas, vehicles of all sorts and foot passengers of both sexes. But there was not a human sound; anywhere else such a vast multitude would have given forth a mighty murmur, a tumultuous clatter like that of the sea; a vapour of noise would have floated above that prodigious congregation of individuals. But crowds composed of Russian elements are always silent.

At the end of the bridge, hung signs of acrobats and paintings of freaks, coloured in the most barbaric manner; boa constrictors, bearded women, giants, dwarfs, strong men and three-headed calves, — which to me had an exotic and peculiar character, thanks to the gigantic inscriptions in Russian letters. Small stalls for the sale of the usual cheap trifles and small wares, of holy images, ridiculously low priced, of cakes, green apples, sour milk, beer, kwass, rose to right and left of the planked causeway; at the back of them stuck out the ends of the joists which had not been sawed off, so that they looked like baskets the ribs of which have not yet been filled in by the basket-maker.

The boot-dealers' stall with their shoes, boots, and felt socks, attracted my attention as being peculiar to the country. There were the daintiest women's shoes of white felt, adorned with red or blue stitching, not unlike the shoes called "sorties-de-bal," which dancing girls put on over their thin satin shoes to go to the carriage which awaits them: Cinderella alone could have put her foot into them.

The fair at Nijni-Novgorod is a city in itself. The long streets cut each other at right angles and end in

squares with a fountain in the centre. The wooden houses that border them are composed of a ground floor, containing a shop and a store-room, and an overhanging story supported by posts, in which the dealer and his clerks sleep; this overhanging story and the posts upon which it rests, form in front of the stalls a show-place and a continuous covered gallery; the bales which are unloaded in front may, in case of rain, be put under shelter there, and the passers-by, safe from the carriages, talk over what they want, or satisfy their curiosity without running any greater risk than that of being elbowed.

The streets sometimes end in the plain. A most curious thing it is to see outside the fair grounds, the camps of carts, with the half wild horses unharnessed and fastened to the side boards, the drivers sleeping on a bit of coarse stuff or fur. Unfortunately the costumes are more ragged than picturesque; although they do not lack a certain amount of characteristic savageness, there are no bright colours, save here and there a pink shirt; ochre, sienna, Cassel earth, and bitumen, would suffice to paint these things; something, however, can be made out of the smock-frocks, the tulupes, the bands crossed around the legs, the esparto shoes, the

yellow bearded faces, and the little thin horses whose bright eyes shine upon you through the long hair of their wild manes.

In one of these camps were Siberians who dealt in furs; the skins, which had been only roughly prepared, so as to keep, were lying pell-mell on mats, the fur inside, without the least attempt to show them off to advantage. To the layman it looked like a sale of rabbit skins. The dealers did not look any better than their goods, and yet the value of the latter amounts to enormous sums. Arctic beaver, Zibeline marten, and blue Siberian fox skins fetch amazing prices which would startle Western people. A blue fox pelisse is worth ten thousand roubles or forty thousand francs. A collar of beaver, with white hair showing above the brown fur, costs one thousand roubles. I possess a small cap of beaver which in Paris would not fetch fifteen francs, but which caused me to be well thought of in Russia where people are judged somewhat by their furs; it cost seventy-five silver roubles. Innumerable points which we do not notice increase or diminish the value of fur: if the animal was killed during winter and has its winter down, the price is higher, for the fur is warmer and will keep out greater

cold; the nearer the animal has been killed to the Arctic regions, the softer is the fur. The furs of our temperate countries become insufficient when the thermometer falls to four below zero: they do not retain sufficiently long the heat which they receive in the apartments.

A characteristic industry of Russia is that of the trunk makers. In the making of trunks the imitation of the West gives way to the pure Asiatic taste. There are always many trunk shops in Nijni-Novgorod and it was in them that I stayed longest. Charming indeed are the boxes of all sizes, painted with bright colours and with ornaments of silver or gold varnish, covered with blue, red, or green spangles, with metallic reflections, ornamented with gilt nails, symmetrically arranged, trellised with thongs of white or buff leather, strengthened with steel or copper corner pieces, and closed with artlessly complicated locks. They are exactly such as one imagines would be the trunks of an Ameer or a Sultana on their travels. When in use these trunks are provided with a cover of strong linen, which is taken off on arrival; they then serve as chests of drawers, no doubt to the great regret of their owners, who would prefer civilised

magnificence to this lovely, barbaric luxuriousness. I regret that I did not buy a certain painted box, varnished like the mirror of an Indian princess; but I was ashamed to put my wretched clothes in a casket which had been made for cashmeres and brocades.

With this exception one finds at the Nijni-Novgorod fair mostly what is called in trade "l'article Paris." This is flattering to our patriotism, but regrettable from the point of view of picturesqueness: one does expect to find, after travelling thirty-three hundred miles, something else than the stock of Parisian bazaars. These various trifles are greatly admired, for the matter of that, but they do not form the serious side of the fair; at which an enormous business is done, sales of ten thousand cases of tea for instance, which remain on the river, or five or six vessels laden with grain, worth several millions, or else a quantity of furs to be delivered at such a price, and which are not shown. The great movement of business is therefore so to speak invisible. Tea-houses furnished with a fountain for ablutions and intended for the Mussulmans, serve as a meeting-place and stock-exchange to the contracting parties. Jets of vapour hiss from the samovar; moujiks, wearing red or white shirts, move around with trays in

their hands; long-bearded merchants in blue caftans, seated opposite Asiatics wearing black astrakhan lambskin caps, drain their saucers full of the hot infusion with a small piece of sugar between their teeth, with as much indifference as if immense interests were not being discussed in these apparently idle conversations. In spite of the diversity of races and dialects, Russian is the only language spoken in business transactions, and over and above the confused murmur of talk floats, perceptible even to the stranger, the sacred word: *Roubl-Serebrom* (silver rouble).

The various faces in the crowd excited my curiosity more than the sight of the shops. The Tartars, with prominent cheek bones, wrinkled eyes, concave noses such as we imagine the moon's profile to have, thick lips, yellow complexion turning grayish, and close shaved temples, were to be met with in great numbers, with their little piqué chintz caps placed on top of the skull, their brown caftans and their metal plated belts. The Persians were easily known by their long oval faces, their great arched noses, their brilliant eyes, thick black beards and noble Oriental physiognomy; one could not have helped noticing them even though attention had not been drawn to them by their conical lambskin caps,

their striped silk gowns and their cashmere sashes. A few Armenians in tattered tunics with hanging sleeves; wasp-waisted Circassians wearing a sort of low buck-skin cap, stood out in the crowd; but what I was eagerly looking for, especially when I reached the particular quarter where tea is sold, was the Chinese. For a moment I thought my wish would be fulfilled, as I saw the shops with up-curved roofs, fretted trellises, with smiling figures on the acroters, which might justify the fancy that one had been transported by the touch of a wand into a city of the Celestial Empire. But on the threshold of the shops and behind the counters I could see none but kindly Russian faces: there was not a single pleated pigtail, not a single face with oblique eyes and eye-brows in the shape of circum-flexes, not a single hat in the form of a stew-pan cover, not a single blue or violet silk gown; there were no Chinese at all. I do not know exactly why I should have expected to find them, but I had supposed I should meet at Nijni-Novgorod a certain number of these strange beings, who, as far as we are concerned, exist upon screens and porcelain vases only. Not having thought of the enormous distance between Nijni-Novgorod and the Chinese frontier, I had, like a

perfect fool, thought that the merchants of the Middle Empire themselves brought their teas to the fair. The well-known repugnance of the Chinese to leave their own country and to mingle with the outer barbarians, should have prevented my indulging in such a fancy, but it had taken such a hold upon me that in spite of the evidence of my own eyes I asked for the Chinese repeatedly. None had come for three years; on this occasion a single one had made his appearance, but in order to avoid the importunate curiosity of the people, he had put on European dress. One was expected to come to the next fair, though it was not very certain. These explanations were very kindly given me by a merchant from whom I bought some tea, but on learning I was a French writer he insisted on my accepting some Pekoe, in which he mixed one or two handfuls of white tipped flowers, and in addition presented me with a tablet or brick bearing on one side an inscription in Chinese characters, and on the other the red seal of the Kiaktha custom-house, the uttermost Russian post. The brick is formed of an enormous quantity of leaves compressed together and reduced to the smallest volume. It looks like a plate of bronze or green porphyry. This is the tea which the Manchu Tartars make use

of when travelling across the steppes and with which they make that sort of butter soup described by Father Huc in his interesting work.

Not far from the Chinese quarter, for that is the name given to it at Nijni-Novgorod, are the shops of Eastern wares. I cannot describe the elegance, the majesty of the Effendis in silk caftans with cashmere sashes, bristling with poniards, who with the most disdainful coolness sat enthroned upon their divans in the midst of a wealth of brocades, velvets, silks, flowered stuffs, silver and gold gauzes, Persian carpets, scarlet cloths, no doubt embroidered by the fingers of captive Peris; mouth-pieces for pipes, narghilehs of Khorassan steel, amber chaplets, vials of essences, stools inlaid with mother of pearl, slippers embroidered with gold arabesques — enough to send a colourist into ecstasies.

I was beginning to weary of wandering along these endless streets bordered by shops and stalls; I was getting hungry and I yielded to the invitation which Nikita's sign sent me from the other side of the river; Nikita being the Collot or the Véfour of Nijni. Moujiks standing upon the axles of the wheels on which they had carried long logs, were galloping across the bridge,

trying to pass each other; their coolness, their boldness, and their gracefulness were wonderful; the speed at which they went made their shirts blow out like chlamydes; braced on their feet, their arms outstretched, their hair flying in the wind they looked like Greek heroes, and one might have sworn it was a chariot race at the Olympic games.

Nikita's Restaurant is a wooden house with great windows, behind which show the broad leaves of the hothouse plants with which every establishment with any pretence to fashion must be filled, for the Russians are very fond of verdure. Waiters in English dress served me with sturgeon soup, beefsteak and horse-radish, salmi of grouse — the grouse is unavoidable — chicken *à la chasseur*, a jelly of some kind with too much fish glue in it, an exquisitely delicate ice-cream flavoured with almonds, the whole washed down with iced seltzer water and a fairly good claret. What I most enjoyed, however, was the liberty to smoke, for it is expressly forbidden to do so within the fair, the only fire tolerated there being that of the lamps burning before the holy images with which every shop is adorned.

Having finished dinner I went back to the fair, still

expecting to find something new. A feeling akin to that which keeps people at the Opera balls in spite of the heat, the dust, and the fatigue, prevented my returning to the hotel. After having traversed a few lanes I reached a square on which arose on one hand a church and on the other a mosque. The church was surmounted by a cross, the mosque by a crescent; the two symbols shone peacefully in the air of evening, gilded by an impartial or indifferent ray of the sun, which is about one and the same thing. The two forms of worship seem to live like good neighbours, for religious tolerance is widely practised in Russia, which counts even idolaters among its subjects,—the Parsees who worship fire.

The door of the Orthodox church was open and evening prayer was being said in it. It was not easy to enter, for the compact multitude filled the building as completely as liquid fills a vase. Yet by using my elbows I managed to make my way in. The interior of the church looked like a golden furnace: forests of candles and constellations of chandeliers made the gilding of the Ikonostas flame again as the metallic reflections mingled with the rays of light in sudden flashes and dazzling phosphorescence. This mass of

light formed in the upper part of the cupola a dense red mist into which ascended the glorious chants of the Greek liturgy sung by the popes and repeated in a low voice by the congregation. The bowings called for by the ritual made the whole of that assembly of believers bend and rise at the prescribed moment with a regularity comparable to that of a well executed military manœuvre.

After a few moments I went out, for I already felt the perspiration streaming over my body as if I were in a vapour bath. I should much have liked to visit the mosque also, but it was not Allah's hour.

What was I to do with the remainder of my evening? A drojki passing by I hailed it, and without asking me where I wanted to go the driver started his horse at a gallop: that is quite the way the izsvochtchicks do; they rarely inquire whither they are to take their fare. A *na leva* or *na prava* tells them at need which way to go. My driver after having traversed the bridge that leads to Nikita's, began to gallop across the country along rudimentary roads marked only by horrid ruts; I let him go on, for I took it for granted he would drive me somewhere, and indeed the intelligent fellow had bethought himself that a gentleman of

my kidney could not have intended to go anywhere at that hour of the evening, but to the quarter reserved to the tea, music, and pleasure-houses.

Night was falling. We traversed with terrific velocity rough ground with many pools of water, in a penumbra through which partially built houses showed like skeletons. At last lights began to pierce the darkness with red points; bursts of music reached my ears, telling of orchestras. We had got to the place. From the house, with open doors and wretched windows, issued the drone of balaleïkas mingled with guttural cries; strange silhouettes showed against the windows; on the narrow plank platform staggered intoxicated shadows and showed extravagant toilettes, alternately lost in darkness and brilliantly lighted.

If the Cythera of antiquity had for a girdle the azure waters of the Mediterranean, the Muscovite Cythera was surrounded by a girdle of mud, which I did not care to meddle with. In the squares, at the crossings of streets, the waters, owing to the flatness of the ground, collected and formed deep quagmires in which the wheels of carriages, stirring up the most noisome stenches, sank up to the axles. Caring little to be upset in such a quagmire, amid a block of half

submerged drojkis, I ordered my driver to turn around and to take me back to the Smyrnof Hotel. By his amazed glance I understood he looked upon me as an individual of not much account, and as an absurdly rigorous person; but he obeyed and I wound up my evening by walking round the Kremlin. The moon had risen and at times one of its silvery beams revealed under the shadow of the trees two people embracing each other closely or walking slowly along hand in hand.

The next day I spent in visiting the upper part of Nijni-Novgorod. From a belvedere placed at the outer angle of the Kremlin and overlooking a beautiful public garden outspread on the hilly slope, with cool masses of verdure, and sinuous yellow sanded walks, one has a wonderful view, a limitless panorama. Through undulating plains which turn lilac, pearl gray and steel blue in the distance, the Volga rolls in great curves, now dark, now bright, according as it reflects the sky or the shadow of a cloud. On the nearer bank of the river I could scarce make out the few houses, looking smaller than toy villages manufactured in Nuremberg. The vessels at anchor near the shore resembled a Lilliputian fleet. Everything was lost, effaced and swallowed up

in the serene, azure, somewhat sad immensity which recalled the infinite expanse of the sea. It was a genuinely Russian horizon.

There was nothing more for me to see and I started back for Moscow, freed from the obsession which had led me to undertake this long trip. No longer did the demon of travel whisper in my ear: "Nijni-Novgorod!"

A Trip to Belgium and Holland

A TRIP TO BELGIUM AND HOLLAND

BEFORE I enter upon the account of my glorious expedition, I deem it my duty to apprise the universe that herein will be found neither lofty political reflections, nor theories of railway construction and maintenance, nor complaints of Belgian literary piracy, nor dithyrambics in honour of the millions of money always forthcoming for any undertaking in that happy land, a true industrial Eldorado. I shall speak only of what I shall have seen with my own eyes, that is with my glasses or my telescope, for I should fear that my eyes alone might deceive me. I shall borrow nothing from guide-books or from works on history or geography, and that is so rare a merit that I deserve credit for it.

This is the first voyage I have ever undertaken, and I have returned from it convinced that the writers of accounts of travel have never even set foot in the countries they describe; or, at least, granting they have visited them, that they had their story ready prepared, as was the case with the Abbé de Vertot's siege.

Now, if any curious reader desires to learn the reason why I went to Belgium rather than anywhere else, I am quite willing to tell it to him, for I have nothing to hide from so respectable a person as my reader. The notion came into my mind in the Louvre Museum, as I was walking through the Rubens Gallery. The sight of his handsome women, with full forms, of those lovely and healthy bodies, of those mountains of rosy flesh with their wealth of golden hair, filled me with the desire to compare them with their living prototypes. Further, the heroine of my forthcoming novel being fair, I wished, as the saying is, to kill two birds with one stone. These, then, were the motives which impelled a worthy and simple-minded Parisian to run away for a brief season from his beloved gutter of the Rue Saint-Honoré. I was not bound to the East, like Father Enfantin, in search of the free woman; I was on my way to the North in quest of the fair-haired female; yet I was scarcely more successful than the venerable Father Enfantin, ex-god and now engineer.

You are aware of the difficulty a Parisian experiences in dragging himself away from Paris, and how deeply the human plant strikes its roots between the cracks of

the paving stones. It took me quite three months to make up my mind to that fortnight's trip. I packed and unpacked a dozen times, and I secured a seat in every stage-coach; I cannot tell how many times I bade farewell to the three or four people who, I fancied, might possibly miss me. My feelings were harrowed by the repetition of these pathetic scenes, and I was in a fair way to ruin my digestion by dint of drinking stirrup-cups. Finally, one fine morning, having exchanged a rather large number of five-franc pieces for a very small number of gold pieces, I took myself by the collar and kicked myself out of my own house, ordering the friend whom I left in it to fire upon me as he would at a mad wolf if I ventured to return before the lapse of three weeks, and forthwith I proceeded to the fatal Rue du Bouloi, where the coach was standing.

My father, who accompanied me to the stage, behaved admirably on this tremendous occasion. He did not press me to his breast and he did not give me his blessing, any more than he gave me anything else. I also behaved in the manliest fashion; I did not shed tears; I did not kiss the soil of the fair France I was about to leave, and I even hummed gaily enough, and

as much out of tune as usual, a little air which stands me in the way of my "lilli bulero" and "tiralirala."

The coach started, and, on reaching the Villette gate, I could say, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau,— "Farewell, Paris; city of mud, smoke, and noise."

Wretched indeed are the approaches to the Queen of cities. There surely cannot be anything meaner than the houses, the sides of which have been laid bare by the demolition of their neighbours, and which still preserve the blackened imprint of the chimney flues, rags of wall-paper and traces of half effaced paint; the waste ground intersected by pools of water and flecked with hillocks of refuse. It was especially on my return, when I had got accustomed to the cleanliness and neat appearance of Flemish towns that this degradation and filth struck me most forcibly.

Let me not dwell upon this theme, but rather allow the reader's imagination to evoke a pleasant scene — that of our first stop for dinner. Let him figure to himself a long table on the handsome white cloth of which blaze constellations of plates and dishes; a couple of enthusiastic travellers and a dozen others absolutely practical, who, with their napkins fastened round their necks, look like Greek heroes with marble

chlamys, a resemblance strengthened by the warlike fashion in which they brandish their weapons of offence.

But, O ye treacherous keepers of hostels, to whom as to women might be applied Shakespeare's words: "Fickle as the wave," Machiavellian Palforios, double-faced hosts, do you suppose that, maugre my apparent innocence, I did not fathom your diabolical invention, intended to make starving travellers lose ten of the precious twenty minutes granted them by the implacable conductor for the purpose of taking their meal?

I denounce to the ambulatory and tourist world this execrable trick, the more to be feared that it presents itself in the form of a fine tureen in thick china, with blue lines, filled with a soup so abundantly covered with fatty disks that it dispels all distrust. But that soup must have been cooked in the devil's own pot on top of a volcano instead of a kitchen range, for it is many degrees hotter than molten lead and keeps on boiling when served in the plate.

The battle between the inkeeper and the travellers, called dinner, having come to an end, not wholly to my disadvantage, thanks to my expeditious ferocity, we were returned to our cage and went off at a gallop.

The trees kept on flying by, to the right and left; the rosy tints on the horizon turned violet; the landscape became more indistinct, and the sun, veiled in mist, looked like a dropped egg, a most humiliating thing for an orb to which M. de Malfilâtre addressed an ode that d'Alembert declared admirable.

The fall in the temperature and the cold of the growing night covered the window of the coach with a pearly dew that streamed down abundantly and that prevented my making out the various objects, already rendered indistinct by the shades of evening, while puffs of icy cold wind compelled me to draw my head in every time I peered out, just like a snail whose horns are touched; I therefore gave up playing the observer, and settled down in my corner as comfortably as I could.

A violent jolt awoke me, and I heard the coach rumbling over what seemed to be a sort of boarded floor. I lowered the window and made out in the darkness another more opaque and more intense obscurity, like black velvet on black cloth; it was Péronne, which we had been entering for the past half-hour through a complicated and most discouraging series of gates and drawbridges, that greatly contributed

to make one understand its impregnability. As we drove across a sort of square, I caught a glimpse, thanks to a glimmer of two or three stars that had put their heads out of a cloud attic, of the faint outlines of a four-sided tower. And that was all I managed to see. After rattling for some time longer through narrow streets, the houses in which shook as the lumbering coach passed by, we emerged through as many gates as we had passed on entering.

On leaving Péronne I fell asleep again, and when I reopened my eyes the gray light of day was beginning to show. We were not far from Cambrai, and the appearance of the country was completely different. The temperature was growing markedly colder, and I looked at every instant for the coming of Polar bears and ice-floes. It was about here that I first understood that I was no longer in Pantin or Bagnolet. The French type tended to disappear and was replaced by the Flemish. This is also the latitude in which the use of shoes and stockings begins to be unknown, and where people are so careful to wash their houses that they never wash their faces.

What can I tell you about Cambrai, save that it is a fortified city of which François Salignac de Lamothe

Fénelon was formerly bishop, and from which he drew his appellation of the Swan of Cambrai, by opposition to Bossuet's the Eagle of Meaux? As far as swans go, I only saw, on passing through, a splendid flock of geese, some white and others spotted with gray.

A fortified city, and fortified by Vauban to boot, is the ugliest and most dismal place in the world. Imagine three zigzagging brick walls forming endless angles, and separated by ditches full of reeds, rushes, yellow water-lilies and potatoes, and, generally speaking, all manner of things, except water, of course; three walls with no other ornaments than embrasures for guns, with shutters painted green, and the whole three of them exactly alike. The tender rose colour of the bricks and the peaceful green of the shutters, opened every morning so that the guns may take the air, produce the most singular and pastoral effect possible.

I flatter myself that I am a profound ignoramus as regards military architecture and strategy, and I confess that these much bepraised fortifications seemed to me fitter for the growing of vines or wall peaches than for the defence of a city. What I want are donjons, round towers and square, superimposed ramparts, battlements, barbicans, draw-bridges, portcullises and all

the apparatus of ancient fortresses; lunettes, cunettes, casemates, bastions, counterscarps, and demi-lunes are not much to my fancy; like Mascarille I prefer full moons.

I saw nothing noteworthy in Cambrai, where we stopped for breakfast, save a huge *Presse* poster and another of more unpretentious dimensions which conveyed to the inhabitants of the place the information that there would be performed in the theatre of Cambrai, upon that evening, the splendid play entitled "Edward in Scotland," widely admired in Paris and which would be presented by actors of the first rank. Also, a rather handsome tower on the right of the road, which I had not time to examine.

I was struck by the fact that nearly all the streets were sanded with blue dust; the passage of three or four coal carts scattering, as they went, a fine powder, explained the peculiarity. I had already my pencil in my hand to note that "In these distant and hitherto undescribed regions the soil, owing to strange phenomenon, is blue." Many travellers' notes rest on no sounder basis of fact.

Well, to be done with Cambrai, here is the aspect of the place, which I kindly give for the benefit of

amateurs of local colour: the ground, blue; the sky, the tint of dull Nile water; the houses, the shade of faded rose leaves; the roofs, episcopal purple; the inhabitants, light pumpkin; the women, straw yellow.

When Cambrai was left behind the country assumed a character entirely different from that I had seen hitherto; the North began to make itself felt, and the first puffs of its icy breath already struck on my face. I had left Paris in my shirt-sleeves with the thermometer up at ninety; within twenty hours I found that my virtue was insufficient as a garment, and I carefully wrapped myself up in my cloak.

Never have I seen anything more charming and blooming than the picture unfolded before me on leaving that ugly old town, black with coal dust and covered with a pall of smoke.

The heavens were of a very pale blue turning to a light lilac as it melted into the band of rosy reflections made by the rising sun on the edge of the horizon. The land rose and fell in soft undulations, breaking the monotony of the lines, almost always flat in this part of the country, and narrow streaks of azure harmoniously bounded the view on either side of the road. Great fields of opium poppies pearly with dew rustled

softly under the breath of morning, as the shoulders of a young girl shiver as she emerges from the bath. The flower of the opium poppy is almost the same as that of the iris: of a delicate blue with white predominating. These great stretches of azure looked like pieces of sky spread out to dry by some celestial laundress. The heavens themselves had the appearance of an overset field of poppies, if the comparison proves more satisfactory to my reader. The transparency, delicacy, and lightness of the tone were such that it might have been taken for a water-colour by Turner; yet there were but two prevailing tints, pale blue and pale lilac, with here and there a few bands of that grass-green called Veronese green by painters, two or three streaks of ochre and golden lights tipping distant clumps of trees. Nothing could be more exquisite; it was one of those effects that neither painting nor writing can reproduce and which are felt rather than seen.

As we advanced the view became more extensive and new prospects opened up on all sides. Little brick houses, hidden in the foliage and red as apis set in moss, peeped inquisitively between the branches to watch us pass by. Pools of water flashed under the

slanting rays of the sun, and the slate roofs of church steeples shimmered suddenly like silver spangles; wide openings allowed the eye to travel over meads of the loveliest spring green imaginable, and revealed innumerable calm and peaceful views of the most familiarly Flemish character and most tender in their charm. Especially were there little paths, real truants' foot-paths, that joined the road after running by the side of some wall or hawthorn hedge, which had the most engaging, wild, and uncultivated look in the world, and that caused me infinite delight. I should have liked to get out of the coach and to wander down one of these paths that must have unquestionably led into the pleasantest and most picturesquely rustic spots. You could never guess how many idylls in the manner of Gessner these meandering ways led me to compose; into what oceans of cream my thoughts were led by them, and what quantities of spinach with sugar they induced my imagination to cut fine.

We frequently traversed hamlets, villages, and small towns built wholly of brick, delightfully clean, and so daintily constructed, by comparison with the hideous huts around Paris, that I could not recover from the surprise they filled me with.

All these houses, striped red and white, covered with designs formed by the various ways of laying the bricks, with their green shutters, brightly painted and varnished, their projecting cornices, their violet slate roofs, their covered wells festooned with hops or Virginia creeper, recall the towns in painted wood manufactured in Nuremberg for Christmas presents for children. Of course, they are larger, but otherwise identical, and one of these villages might have been presented to young Gargantua for a plaything.

I shall say nothing of Bouchain, which is so well walled a city that I passed it by without perceiving it. With your permission we shall skip a few relays and reach Valenciennes.

It was as we approached this city that began a practical joke which lasted throughout our trip: every fifteen minutes we crossed a stream or a provincial water-course, and, like intelligent travellers, we inquired of some more or less stupid Walloon: —

"What is the name of this river, sir?"

"The Scheldt, sir."

"Ah! thank you."

A little farther a new river would appear, and we would again ask the same question.

"Would you have the kindness to tell me what this river is, Mr. Walloon?"

"Certainly; it is the Scheldt, canalised."

"I am very glad to hear it, sir; canals are one of the blessings of civilisation, and I love them; but one should not have too many of them."

The Walloon would remain in the calm and unpretentious attitude that becomes a man conscious of his own rectitude; apparently he did not grasp the meaning of the latter part of the sentence.

"Now, away yonder, where I see boats with red sails and apple-green rudders?"

"That is the Scheldt, sir; the Scheldt itself."

We had become so thoroughly used to that reply, that when we arrived on the shores of the sea, at Ostend, my companion refused steadily to believe that it was the ocean, and he maintained stoutly, *unguibus et rostro*, that it was still the Scheldt in the form of a canal.

I entered Valenciennes full of thoughts of embroideries and lace which I could not get rid of; I wished the town had been openworked and traceried from end to end, and most painfully surprised was I at seeing but few specimens of Valenciennes lace. The sil-

houette of Malines unconsciously stands out in my mind in the form of innumerable little filaments, exceedingly tenuous, on which are embroidered ideally delicate flowers and figures after the manner of Gothic tracery, the work of fairies. Alençon is of necessity Alençon lace, and it is most regretfully that I tolerate houses of stone and plaster in it. Every city famous for some special product appears in my imagination under the figure of that product, but innumerable are the disappointments to which such fancies expose a trusting tourist.

For the rest, Valenciennes is a pretty little town, with a few Renaissance houses, a town-hall of the early part of Louis XIV's reign, and a church in the Florentine taste. It was at Valenciennes that I first saw on the walls the following formidable inscription, which I found repeated on every tenth house to the end of my wondrous Odyssey: —

VERKOOPT MEN DRANKEN

which means, in good Flemish: *Here is drink sold.* It was in Valenciennes also that I received in exchange for the money I paid out, astounding small change in cents and leaden pieces marked with a crowned W,

which the devil himself could make nothing of, and that I was handed a hemp straw instead of a match wherewith to light my cigar.

In the main street of Valenciennes I beheld the one and only Rubens I came across in the whole course of my trip in search of golden hair and voluptuous forms. It was a stout kitchen wench, with huge hips and amazingly large breasts, who was quietly sweeping the gutter, never for an instant suspecting that she constituted a most authentic Rubens. This find aroused in me hopes that proved subsequently absolutely deceitful.

Valenciennes is the last French town; after traversing a few leagues more we should reach the frontier; I therefore carefully cleaned my glasses in order to lose no part of the wonderful things I was about to behold.

We at last reached a place where we were bidden to descend from the coach, and where our luggage was transferred to a sort of shed to undergo examination. We had left France. I was greatly surprised at not feeling violently moved. I had fancied that a heart at all patriotic would at least beat very much faster on leaving the adored soil of the Fatherland; but I

found out for myself that this was not the case. I had also entertained the belief that frontiers were marked with little dots and coloured with a blue or red line, as may be seen on maps; here again I was mistaken.

A café, yclept "Café de France," and adorned with a cock that looked like a camel, marked the spot where the *French* territory ended. A tavern, flaunting "The Belgian Lion" for a sign, indicated the other spot where began the dominions of His Majesty King Leopold. The tavern sign did not give me a very high opinion of the existing condition of art in the blessed land of literary piracy. As a general rule, if you want to paint a Belgian lion, do not take for model a lion, but an adolescent poodle; dress it up in a pair of nankeen breeches, a tow wig, and a pipe in its mouth. Then you shall have a Belgian lion that will look particularly well above the legend: — *Verkoopt men dranken.*

I amused myself, while the customs officers were rummaging in my valise, travelling repeatedly from France to Belgium and from Belgium to France. Once, indeed, I had one foot in France and the other in Belgium. But, to my shame be it spoken, my right foot, that stood on French soil, did not in the least

degree tingle patriotically. My comrade, coming up from his side, asked me whether I did not intend to kiss the sacred soil of the Fatherland before getting into the coach again. I sought in vain a spot where I might accomplish this pious purpose; it was devilishly muddy, and I was compelled to omit this indispensable formality.

While waiting for the completion of the customs inspection, the pair of us, thirsting for local colour, dashed into the glorious tavern of "The Belgian Lion," and poured into ourselves more beer than we could reasonably contain; a perfect deluge of faro, lambick, and white Louvain beer, enough to float Noah's ark. We also drank Belgian coffee, Belgian gin, and smoked Belgian tobacco. In a word, we assimilated Belgium in every way we could think of.

Mons is a true Flemish town; its streets are cleaner than the floors of French rooms; they look as though they had been waxed and painted. All the houses, without a single exception, are painted from top to bottom in the most incredible colours; some are white; others ashen blue; others again light fawn, rose, apple-green, frightened-mouse gray, and innumerable other cheerful shades unknown in our own land. Crow-

foot gables are frequently seen; they produce a quaintly agreeable effect.

I got a mere glimpse of the cathedral at the end of a street; it did not strike me as particularly fine. On the other hand, when the coach stopped, I had the leisure to examine a most fancifully charming and bright church, with innumerable belfries, finials and pot-bellied minarets, that gave it a thorough Russian aspect. It looked like no end of cup and balls and pepper-pots symmetrically arranged on the roof, or big apples spitted on a spit. That is a grotesque image of it, but pray imagine a building delightfully capricious and most picturesque in appearance; a joyous, triumphant church, better suited to weddings than to funerals, and fantastically ornamented in the maddest, most flowery and most comical style of the reign of Louis XIII; a mass at once squat and slender; its heavy lightness and light heaviness producing the finest effect.

Unless I am mistaken this church is dedicated to Saint Elizabeth, but it may be that it is to Saint Peter or Saint Jude, but what I am sure of is that it is on the right of the main street coming from Paris.

At Mons I purchased local colour cakes: little round cakes of pastry very liberally sugared, and resembling

somewhat the Italian *paste frole*, though neither the scent nor the taste of them is as delicate. While discussing the pastry I drank a large quantity of gin in order to digest the cakes and I ate a large number of cakes in order to digest the gin.

As we proceeded the lines of the landscape sank more and more to a level, and became more and more despairingly Flemish. The view looked like a billiard table, and but for a row of steeples athwart the rim of the sky there would have been no distinguishing heaven from earth, and it would have been as impossible to estimate the extent of the space as it is at sea.

From time to time the steeples were replaced by the smoking obelisks of the factories, while rows of poplar trees dotted the landscape with strings of exclamation points ! ! ! ! ! ! that made it resemble a pathetic page in a fashionable novel. Hops, the vine of the North, showed more frequently. It is a very pretty plant that climbs up very high poles with a look as of vine-leaves around a thyrsus.

Meanwhile, creatures that, for lack of another term, I must call women, continued to pass from time to time upon the high-road. I must here boldly proclaim

even at the risk of being charged with paradox, that I have never seen anything more burned, more tanned, more derisively brown than these females. I am quite certain that fair-haired women must abound in Abyssinia and Ethiopia, for in Belgium it is mulattoes and negresses that predominate.

The farther one goes the more one breathes a perfume of Catholicity wholly unknown in France. Almost every house has a Madonna or a saint in a niche, and not, I beg you to believe, a saint or a Madonna with broken nose or fingers wanting, but with features and limbs complete. In many villages the Madonnas are dressed in silk gowns and wear a crown, tinsel and elder pith ornaments. As in Spain and Italy a lamp is kept burning before them. The churches also are adorned with true Southern care and amorous coquetry.

When we entered Brussels the rain was falling from the roofs in such abundance that "thirsty dogs might standing drink." Here are my observations of that evening: they bear exclusively on the windows.

The lower panes are covered with a piece of lace of the exact size of the pane, and stretched as tightly as possible. In the centre of the lace is a large hand-embroidered bouquet. The lace is sometimes replaced

by small screens of China matting, plaited exceedingly close, on which are painted landscapes, birds or fruit; these screens, opaque on the street side, allow the people within to see, without being seen, what is going on outside, an occupation rendered the more easy by a combination of concentric mirrors so arranged outside as to reflect into a mirror placed on a table or in a steel globe hung from the ceiling the image of every person traversing the street from either end. I noticed also that all the houses are not only painted in oils but varnished, which is particularly unpleasant to the eye.

After dinner, I started to visit the city, and, after having traversed an endless number of streets lined with houses with crow-foot gables, I suddenly emerged upon the Town Hall Square and experienced the liveliest surprise of my whole trip. It seemed to me as though I had entered another age and the ghost of the Middle Ages had suddenly risen up before me.

Imagine a great square, one whole side of which is occupied by the Town Hall, a marvellous edifice with rows of arches, like the Palace of the Doges in Venice, finials surrounded with traceried balconies, a vast roof filled with decorated attic windows, and then the bold-

est, tallest, slenderest open-work belfry, so slender that it seems to bend with the breeze, and away up on top of it, an archangel, gilded all over, with outspread wings and sword in hand.

On the right, as one looks at the Town Hall, a row of houses that are veritable gems of stone chased by the wondrous hands of the Renaissance. Nothing more lovingly pretty is to be seen anywhere. There are little twisted pillars, overhanging stories, balconies supported by women with pointed breasts and ending in foliage or serpents' tails, medallions with richly carved frames, mythological *baisi-relievi*, allegorical figures upbearing blazoned coats of arms, everything, in a word, that the architectural coquetry of that day could invent that would please and delight the eye. Every one of these houses is admirably preserved; not a stone is wanting, for the triple coat of paint that covers them has protected them as a sheath might have done.

The opposite side is occupied by buildings of a very different character; mansions in the Florentine taste, with vermiculated boss-work, squat pillars, balusters, carved wreaths, fire-pots, and, near the top, great stone scroll-work, volutes twisted several times on

themselves and the technical name of which I do not know. Add to this that almost all the projecting ornaments, such as the capitals of the columns, the grooves of the fluting, the frames of the cartouches and the flames that issue from the braziers are gilded, and you have something strangely magnificent, especially for a poor Parisian who has never yet seen anything else than the houses, dirtied up to the third story, of his own pandemonium.

This side of the square forms a regular architectural gallery, in which every possible variety of Spanish, Italian and French rococo, from the days of Louis XIII to those of Louis XV, is represented by authentic samples admirably selected. I use the word "rococo" in this connection without implying the least reflection upon the thing itself, and merely to designate a period of art that is neither antiquity, nor the Middle Ages, nor the Renaissance, and which, in its way, is just as original and just as worthy of admiration.

Opposite the Town Hall and closing that side of the square, there is a great Gothic palace, a sort of votive mansion, erected by some princess or other in consequence of some happening or other, I do not remember what, having lost the little strip of paper

on which I had copied the Latin inscription on the façade; though I have a good memory, I do not easily recollect epigraphic Latin, especially when I think I have the inscription in my pocket. But on a medal the inscription is of no importance.

This votive house now serves as a meeting place for some dining, smoking, dancing or literary society, and the brilliantly lighted interior made the windows flame out of the dark façade of the old building, itself sunk in the shadow, for the moon was rising behind it and was already casting its veil of lilac, silver glazed crape upon the other houses in the square. The whole thing looked so unnatural and so improbable that I felt as if I were in presence of a piece of stage-setting.

On returning to the hotel my companion and myself were shown to our rooms and our beds, of which we stood in utmost need. Belgian beds are not made like French beds: there are no bolsters, but two huge pillows placed side by side. The blankets are made of cotton, with very effective knots and interlacings. The sheets are of linen; the mattresses are covered with damasked linen not unlike tea-cloths. The candlesticks also are of a different shape from ours: they rest on a very broad base and are somewhat sim-

ilar to those of the time of Louis XV. The flooring is of pine boards in the natural colour, which is a pale salmon, instead of being in marquetry as with us; it is scrubbed every week with sandstone and boiling water. All this may not be very interesting, but it is just such small matters which mark the difference between one country and another.

Brussels is English rather than French in appearance, in the modern portions, and Spanish rather than Flemish in the older. There are few important churches, save Sainte-Gudule in the Rue de la Montagne. The stained-glass windows, the confessionals and the pulpit in this church are of exceeding beauty. It was being scraped, restored, and lime-washed at the time of my visit, for the rage for wash is even worse in Belgium than in France. It was here that I first remarked the Catholic idolatry so widespread in Belgium and quite new to me, for I was acquainted only with our French Voltairian churches. It leads to a profusion of tawdry ornaments, wreaths, *ex-votos*, candles, vases of flowers, embroidered banners, orange trees in boxes, and endless other devout inventions.

A very remarkable thing in Brussels is the inscription borne on every shop: So-and-so, Bootmaker to

the Court; So-and-so, Seed-merchant to the Court; So-and-so, Match-vender to the Court, and so on, without end, and in connection with businesses that apparently have nothing on earth to do with the Court. The pharmacies have for signs huge deer's antlers. As for the wine shops, they are twice as numerous as the houses.

By dint of crawling up the Magdalena-Straas, I managed to reach a fine, large square, called the Place Royale, on which stands a church with a façade on the centre of which there is a nimbus enclosing a sculptured eye that seems to be a model set for the imitation of all the urchins in the place. The Royal Palace is close by; it is a rather large edifice, mediocre architecturally, painted white, in oils, and no doubt a comfortable and commodious dwelling, but one with which art has nothing to do. The park, rather small, is in no wise striking. It contains a small basin, and a few groups, therms, terminals, and statues, all painted in oils and varnished. The trees in this place struck me as being superbly green, even for this country of verdure, and the whole park is delightfully cool.

Having visited the park, I proceeded to the shops of the piratical booksellers; I purchased Alfred de

Musset's *Complete Poems* in one volume, and Jules Sandeau's *Madame de Sommerville;* I wished to purchase also your humble servant's novel, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, but I have to own that I was unable to do so, as it was not to be found anywhere, whereat I was the more mortified that Bibliophile Jacob, Hippolyte Lucas, and other illustrious personages I am acquainted with, are splendidly pirated, and that I had, I confess it with all my characteristic modesty, hitherto considered myself the equal of these gentlemen. My trip has undeceived me, and has scattered to the winds my foolish fancy. The Bibliophile in particular enjoys so great a reputation in this land that Alphonse Royer's and Barbier's *Mauvais Garçons*, and Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame*, the two best novels inspired by the Middle Ages, are reprinted under his name.

The prose volumes of the *Spectacle dans un fauteuil*, by Alfred de Musset, are unknown in Belgium; the pirate of whom I inquired for them was quite taken aback, and wrote forthwith to his agent ordering him to send on the books. This fact does not speak well for the circulation of the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* and the literary taste of Belgian booksellers.

On leaving the shops of these publishers of counter-

feited editions, I took a cab and had myself driven to the Laeken Gate, in order to see the railway. Belgian cabs are very handsome and utterly unlike our wretched conveyances; they are well horsed and go very fast. The one I was in was a sort of landau lined with white velvet, and in Paris would have passed for a splendid equipage. On the other hand, if these cabs are twice as handsome as ours, they are also twice as dear. They usually stand in the Place Royale, and there are some forty of them.

Railways are now all the fashion; they have become a fad, a mania, a craze! To speak ill of the railways is to deliberately expose one's self to the pleasant insults of the friends of progress and utility. It is making certain of being called a retrogressist, a fossil, a partisan of the ancient régime and of barbarism, and of being looked upon as a man devoted to tyrants and obscurantism. But even were I to have applied to me Andrieux' famous line,—

"Harnessed at the back of Reason's car,"

I boldly affirm that a railway is a very foolish invention. As far as looks go, there is nothing picturesque about it. Imagine a number of logs on which are

placed flat, narrow, iron bands (rails), on which fit grooved wheels of small diameter, about as large as the front wheels of our stage coaches; then a long line of carriages, waggons, and cars fastened one to another by iron chains and separated by thick leather buffers to reduce friction and accidental shocks. At the head, the towing machine, a sort of forge on wheels, from which escape torrents of sparks, and resembling, with its upright funnel, an elephant walking along with its trunk in the air. The perpetual snorting of this machine, which, when at work, emits a black smoke, with a noise like that produced by a marine monster with a cold in its head spouting salt water out of its blow-holes, is unquestionably the most unbearable and most painful thing imaginable. The fetid smell of the coal has also to be reckoned among the advantages of this mode of travel.

I had fancied that one felt no manner of jolts or of motion upon the polished rails; that was a mistake, for the carriages drawn by the locomotive oscillate forward and aft, producing a sort of horizontal rolling which turns one sick. It is not a jolting up and down, like that caused by the ruts of an ordinary road, but a motion like that of a drawer on grooves, opened and

closed rapidly several times running. The locomotive starts, the first carriage pulls the second, which strikes against the buffers, and so on in succession to the end of the line. The rebound is something awful, especially when the engine stops, a ceremony which takes place to the accompaniment of a most disagreeable clatter of rattling iron.

The speed, it must be owned, is fairly great, yet it did not seem to me to be much more than that of a postchaise. I was told, it is true, that the engine could be driven much faster and the speed doubled, but there is this small matter to be taken into account, that one may be sent flying into the air to meet aerolites and shooting stars, a sort of trip that possibly has its charm.

I confess I greatly prefer the old-time coaches drawn by horses to all these strange and disturbing machines. A good barouche, with three strong horses and a postilion only half drunk, cracking his whip gaily and thrashing the genii of the air, is far jollier and pleasanter than those rows of hearses sliding silently along the rails to the asthmatic sound of the engine boiler. Good horses that stamp and neigh, with long manes, satiny quarters, red tufts and bells

scanning with their hoofs this beautiful line of Vergil: —

"Quadrupe | dante pu | trem soni | tu quatit | ungula | campum,"

are certainly to be preferred both from the point of view of poetry and from that of convenience. One may then go to the right or to the left, take short cuts and crosscuts instead of following imperturbably a right line, which of all lines is most distasteful to people who are not fortunate enough to be either mathematicians or candle-makers, and who have preserved in some corner of their souls the feeling for the beautiful, which springs, as every one knows, from the use of curved lines and of zigzags, a truth quite familiar to children on their way to school.

In my opinion, even were the suppression of horses and coachmen the only drawback to railways, it ought to be sufficient to prevent their being adopted. I would not so much mind giving up the coachmen, feeling no great sympathy for them, but it would grieve me to have the splendid animal that has furnished Job and M. Dellile with a subject for such fine descriptions, disappear from the surface of the earth, though really at the rate at which utilitarians are going, I fear

it will not be long ere, as in Cruikshanks' caricature, we have the last horse exhibited between a cage containing humanitarians and another full of Papuans from the South Seas. In another century or so, the George Cuviers and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaires of the day will succeed, with the help of comparative anatomy, in reconstructing the skeletons of horses scattered throughout the strata of tufa, limestone, and marl, will write endless descriptions of them in order to demonstrate that they must not be confounded with the animal called *hippoterium*, which lived before the great renewal of the world brought about by steam, or with the cockchafer or the rhinoceros, and that they were not fish either, as maintained by some scholars.

We are not yet as crazy as the Americans who run railways in every direction, under ground, in water, in the attic, in the cellar and from one corner of their rooms to another. We have too much common sense to indulge in such absurdities, and France will assuredly be the last country to be traversed by lines of railways. Railways are much like omnibuses, which are not very costly to operate, traverse long distances and carry a great many passengers, but never go where you want to go; so that a cab and the first street

that happens along will always be infinitely preferable. Railways and omnibuses alike invariably have their terminus in a mud hole, a closed door or a sewer in course of construction; so that in order to get to the place one desires to reach, one has always to have recourse to the ordinary cab and horse.

Whatever is of real use to man was invented from the beginning of the world, and all the people who have come along since then have worn out their brains to find something new, but have made no improvements. Change is far from being progress; it is not yet proved that steamers are better than sailing vessels, or railways with their locomotives than ordinary roads and carriages drawn by horses. For my part, I believe that men will end by returning to the old methods, which are always the best.

The carriages are divided into barouches, stage-coaches, covered waggonettes and ordinary waggons. In the barouches the seats are divided like the stalls in a theatre, so that one sits in small arm-chairs; the stage-coach is identically the same as the ordinary stage-coach. The fares vary from four francs and ten sous to one franc, and there are several trains daily.

The locomotive car, the steam horse, which had been snorting in the most horrible way for some time, began to snort more loudly and to emit smoke more actively; we began to roll on, first slowly, then more rapidly and finally rather fast.

The country we were traversing was uniformly flat and green; here and there the white houses of Laeken bloomed like daisies on the rich emerald sward, spotted with great oxen in the grass up to their bellies; English gardens with yellow walks; sleepy rivers the waters of which looked like tin or quicksilver; Chinese bridges painted in bright colours, passed by on the right and on the left; tall thin poplars flew by at full gallop; steeples showed on the horizon; great pools of water, like the scattered scales of some giant fish, shimmered here and there on the brown earth in the numerous excavations that bordered the road; a few wine-shops, with the *Verkoopt men dranken* in letters a foot long, smiled pleasantly out of their tiny hop-gardens, and made many advances to the traveller, in order to induce him to get down and drink a big glass of good Flemish beer and smoke a pipe of patriotic Belgian tobacco. But all these advances were in vain, for no man may step off, even to get a

drink, which to my thinking is one of the worst disadvantages of railways.

Gates of painted wood, kept by small boys, closed all the cross roads until such time as the train had passed, and at intervals, frail huts of mud and straw sheltered the linemen whose business it is to see that there are no stones on the line.

The engine, having attained its highest rate of speed, produced on us the same effect as that observed on a boat, when the shores appear to be moving, while you yourself are standing still. The fields diapered with the golden colza flowers, began to fly past with amazing rapidity and to form continuous yellow lines in which one could no longer make out the shape of the blooms; the brown road, dotted with little white chalk pebbles, looked like a huge peahen's tail violently drawn from under us; perpendicular lines became horizontal, and had the configuration of the country been more diversified, it would have produced a strange mirage. The silhouette of Malines, from which stood out chiefly a great square tower, passed by so swiftly that when I nudged my companion to notice it, it had already vanished. This great speed was not kept up, either because the coal gave out, or because the

necessity of landing passengers at the various stations compelled the diminution of the pressure. Nevertheless we were approaching Antwerp, and as the railway does not run into the city itself, a crowd of omnibuses of diverse forms and colours was collected at the terminus. The fare on these omnibuses is six sous, as on our own; they are lined with painted and waxed cloth; have a galleried top for the luggage, and are drawn by three horses abreast, as were the first Paris busses. These horses, better fed and handsomer than the wretched brutes that are used for general transportation with us, have only a very light collar for harness, and are otherwise bare.

Antwerp is entered by a stone gate, adorned with boss-work, coats of arms, and trophies. It is on the whole rather majestic-looking; naturally pink, apple-green, and mouse-coloured houses abound in it; I even saw two or three in the most refreshing of tarred wood. I was most astonished, however, at the prodigious number of Madonnas, painted and adorned with glass beads like the kindly mediæval Madonnas, seen at the corner of every street. Calvaries are equally numerous; almost every wall is covered with crosses, spears, ladders, hammers, nails, sponges, crowns of

thorns, arranged in the form of fasces; great Christs, most hangdog looking, painted of a livid flesh colour and streaked with red lines, rise at the crossing of streets and at the corner of squares; for aureole they have a lantern, and nearly all are provided with an inscription that generally runs as follows: "Ex Christo splendor," or "Christus dat lucem," varied in every possible way. It is impossible to render the effect produced by moonlight, in the evening mist, by these life-size figures, with their reddish lantern that resembles the eye of a Cyclops shining through the darkness.

I had seen in Roger de Beauvoir's album, an exceedingly fantastic sketch by Alphonse Royer, consisting of a huge blob of ink, and pompously entitled: "Antwerp at night." It might just as well have been Constantinople or Mazulipatam, but I had formed, thanks to this most fallacious drawing, a most sombre idea of Antwerp, so that I was mightily surprised to find I could see perfectly there, even at night, thanks to the lantern-bearing Christs. Antwerp is anything but black, mediæval, and crowded; there is not a single stagnant gutter, not a single unpaved street, nothing, in a word, of the picturesque chaos that makes Rouen so

dear to artists. Everything in Antwerp is broad, spacious, airy, and fabulously clean; everything has three coats of paint, even the cathedral, which is bedizened with a most comical pistachio colour.

We went down to the Place Verte, with the praiseworthy intention of having a good dinner, though we did not fully succeed in doing so; but heaven, that considers man's intentions, it is said, will, I hope, pardon our failure. We had been recommended to the Hôtel de l'Union, as a good place to restore the inner man; we therefore proceeded to the *Restauration de l'Union*, for in Belgian-French a restaurant is called a "restauration." It is a very large building of a bluish white, with large windows, metal posts and of commendable appearance. We drank a fairly good Rhine wine, but the cookery was commonplace and had nothing characteristic about it.

As there was still light enough, we visited the Cathedral. It contains three marvellous paintings by Rubens: "The Descent from the Cross," "The Raising of the Cross," and "The Assumption of the Virgin." The first two have shutters, also painted by Rubens, making four more pictures. Six pages of Ohs!, Ahs!, and exclamation points would but feebly

represent the stupor of admiration with which I was filled at the sight of these prodigies. I should need an octavo volume instead of a chapter. The wooden pulpit, carved by Verbruggen, is admirably beautiful. The subject represents Adam and Eve, and the balustrade of the steps, wreathed in vine leaves and foliage, is full of all sorts of strange birds and animals; among others, of turkey-cocks displaying their tails. Is this meant as a sarcastic allusion to the hearers or to the preacher? I dare not venture to answer so delicate a question. The work exhibits wonderful flexibility and cleanliness of touch, the lines are sharp and free, the whole thing is full and facile. It is rich, luxurious, amazingly varied in invention and curious details. Strong men indeed were these sixteenth-century artists! The church also contains some good paintings by Quentin Matsys, Otto Venius, the master of Rubens, Van Dyck and others. The one pity is that this beautiful cathedral, painted pistachio green outside, is daubed with a hideous canary yellow inside, and with several coats of it at that, laid on with the utmost care.

Having visited the interior of the church, it naturally occurred to us to climb up the steeple; it cost us three francs to do so, rather a high price for a steeple. Be-

fore Victor Hugo's novel made Notre-Dame fashionable, one could ascend the towers for six sous; it costs eight now, which is still reasonable.

There are six hundred and twenty-two steps from the pavement to the base of the cross that surmounts the spire; you ascend a narrow spiral staircase, dimly lighted by narrow loopholes. At first the darkness is very intense, on account of the shadow cast by the neighbouring buildings, but as one gets higher up the light increases in symbolical progression to make the climber understand that the higher one rises above the earth the more is the darkness dispelled, and that the true light is above. Half way up are the bells, those monstrous birds that perch and sing on the stone foliage of cathedrals, and rooms where are moulded in mastic cement the broken finials and where are manufactured the projecting ornaments which time or war constantly destroys on the old church. In justice to the Belgians I am bound to say that they care for their monuments with filial love; no sooner has a stone fallen than it is replaced; a hole made than it is stopped up; they would willingly put the lot of them under glass. The profession of monument is really an agreeable one in this country. Only the Belgians are

far too lavish with their apple-green, lemon-yellow, and other non-Gothic paints. The Town Hall of Alost, through which we passed on our return, is a curious specimen of this sort of thing. The walls are painted grass-green, with fine white lines simulating the joints of the stone; the pillars are slate blue, and the statues and carvings varnished silver white. It is comical to a degree and is exactly like a German toy.

After endless windings in the interior of the great tube, we at last emerged upon the platform, and a vast panorama was outspread before us. It is difficult to imagine a grander spectacle; great waves of air bathed our faces, and the wind's cool kisses dried on our wet brows the perspiration caused by the fatigue of the ascent. Flights of doves passed at intervals and alighted like white flakes upon the balustrade, trefoiled so lightly that I dared not lean on it lest I should fall with it into the abyss. The whole city lay crowded at the feet of the cathedral, like a flock at the feet of the shepherd; the highest houses scarcely reached its ankles, and the crow-foot gables looked quaint indeed from that height; it seemed as though the inhabitants of the city had builded steps to storm the cathedral, but had stopped after constructing a dozen, on seeing

the uselessness of their efforts. These numerous roofs with steps leading to nothing resembled a lot of unfinished Babels.

A bird's-eye view of the city exhibits it in the form of a bow of which the Scheldt forms the cord; the bright red and violet blue roofs showed like scales against the evening mist that was even then rising. The river shone in places like a polished steel blade; in others it had the mat brilliancy of the silvery back of a mirror. On the farther bank was seen the Tête-de-Flandre, and beyond it, vast meadows of a velvety green spangled by the waters of the Scheldt which here indulges in many windings. Boats with red sails moved slowly along, their light wake breaking the dull pellicle of these ribbons of molten lead. The horizontal perspective preventing one from seeing the river bed, the vessels seemed to be sailing on dry land and to be ploughs driven by sails. The keeper of the tower drew our attention to four almost imperceptible little black dots near the sky line; they were four Dutch vessels watching the channels. Berg-op-Zoom lies in that direction, but in vain did I polish the lenses of my glasses, I could not make out anything in the distant mists that looked in the least like a town.

Should you be surprised at my great desire to see Berg-op-Zoom, you must know that it was due to the fact that a grandfather of mine was the first man to storm the place and was presented with a sword of honour in return for that fine action. As this happens to be the most glorious tradition in our family history, I should have been well pleased to see, even from a very great distance, the spot where one of my ancestors had exhibited so much courage. But I did not have that satisfaction.

Great banks of reddish vapours rose one above another with coppery and bronze reflections, like gigantic Titanic armours issuing from the furnace; whole masses would be torn away or fall down, with flaming flashes of light as they met, after the manner of a volcano sinking in and of the sublimest effect. Amid these tawny tints shone the sun, like a huge buckler of fire fastened to the arm of the Destroying Angel. The shape of a great cloud, resembling a warrior seated on a floating islet in a sea of fire, completed the illusion. This strange effect lasted for a few minutes; then the wind blew strong, the outlines of the clouds changed and the archangel melted into mist.

When we had looked long enough at this sight, the

keeper reminded us that we had not yet quite reached the top, and that we had one hundred and twenty steps more to climb. He showed us a narrow staircase no wider than a man's two hands, and told us all we had to do was to keep on climbing.

Imagine a very sharp, very slender spire, hollowed internally, horribly openworked and traceried, as high as Chimborazo, and constantly growing narrower. My comrade, this time, allowed me to go first, an honour I did not in the least covet; indeed, I thought him far too polite. The moment I had ventured within that wretched tube, it appeared to me that I was becoming enormously stout and that I was swelling frightfully. I dreaded being unable to come down again and being compelled to spend the remainder of my days in that place, like the lighthouse keeper's wife, who had grown so stout in her aerial nest that she never was able to pass down the narrow stair she had climbed without difficulty as a slender maiden. I felt heavier than a war elephant bearing a castle on his back; the steps seemed to give way under my feet and my elbows to push the wall outwards, as if it were a bandbox upon which I was leaning. Through the accursed tracery of that infernal spire, as frail as the

stamped-out paper lace used for confections and preserved fruits, I could see long streaks of bluish air or the pavement of the square, which appeared to be the size of a draught-board, with men as big as cockchafers and dogs no larger than flies. It was indeed a most comforting outlook!

By way of adding to the pleasures of the situation it was blowing great guns, and everything in that devil of a steeple was jigging round like the plates on a dresser when a carriage rattles by.

I turned round to see whether my comrade was following me, and stuck my toe in his eye, which fact will give you some idea of the steepness of the stairs. At last we reached the small loophole that opened out on the void, near the ball of the cross. We had completed our climb, and sat down for a few moments on the top step to rest ourselves. While thus seated the happy thought occurred to me that some day the steeples of cathedrals were bound to fall down, and that this might be the very day when the spire of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Antwerp was to give way and fall plump on the pavement below. As it would not have been particularly gratifying to find ourselves at the extreme summit of the parabola, I imparted my

reflection to my comrade, who thought it was in very good taste, and we forthwith tumbled down the spiral stairs, our ears laid well back like hunted hares.

Just as we reached the uppermost platform, the sun, staggering in drunken fashion, stumbled and plunged into an abyss of mist. From time to time an intermittent light, like that of a fire that is being blown up, shot through the black cloud bars. It was of a magnificence that neither brush nor pen can portray; the most amazing and transcendental balderdash would prove inadequate.

On the opposite side there were only cool blue, glazed violet, vaporous gray tints; the night had already come on. Malines, with its steeple with the quadruple dial, alone caught a flaming beam, which made it stand out brilliantly against the background of cultivated fields that showed in various colours. The faint outline of Brussels scarcely peeped above the distant line of the horizon, while the locomotive, with its chariot tail and smoke aigrette, crawled along the rails like some strange animal. A few country houses, in which lights already appeared, dotted with brilliant points the broad tints that grew darker and darker. Then the sun disappeared completely.

No doubt you remember our visiting Antwerp some ten years ago, my dear comrade, when the short thirty-mile line, then just opened, was the only railway on the continent? You must certainly remember the pretty houses, looking like German toys, that we would have liked to carry away in pine boxes as gifts for the children of our acquaintances; the apple-green, rose, sky-blue, citron, fawn, lilac-coloured façades, relieved with white lines, that looked so clean, so bright, so dainty? Well, all is changed. The houses with crow-foot gables, we were wont to admire so much, are now all equally smeared over with that horrible yellow wash used in the Middle Ages to paint over the houses of traitors. It was the worst punishment which that artistic age could devise. No doubt in the case of peculiarly aggravated treason a chocolate-coloured plinth was added to the walls thus dishonoured. Yet do not charge the people of Antwerp with bad taste on this account; they were only too willing to enliven the walls of their dwellings with pleasant shades; it is superior authority that has compelled them to commit this crime of anti-picturesqueness; a decree of the municipality has condemned the innocent town to array itself in a pumpkin-coloured dress and to put on the

livery of shame. It is right to denounce to the hatred of painters and to the curses of poets the name of the chief promoter of this ridiculous measure: he is called Gerard Lagrelle. In the Town Hall there is on exhibition a set of sample colours that may be employed by house-painters. It is a scale of false tones that would make Rubens turn over in his grave, and one would need the license of the days of the Regency in order to characterise as they deserve some of these shades; they run from leaden white to putrid yellow. That is the present condition of Antwerp. I must add that the *faille*, that survival of the Spanish mantilla, has almost entirely disappeared.

The lantern-bearing Christs and the illumined Madonnas at the street corners seemed to me to be much less numerous than formerly. The three paintings by Rubens in the Cathedral did not dazzle me as they did on my first trip. Is this due to my sight having failed during the past ten years, or have these noble heads really undergone an alteration due to time? I congratulate myself on having come into the world at a time when the masterpieces of Rubens, Raphael, and Titian were still visible, and I cannot help pitying posterity that will know them by engravings only. Our

descendants will not enjoy the serene pleasure of admiring a sublime thought under a divine form.

It is fifty miles from Antwerp to Liège, a mere step nowadays. So my comrade and myself were unable to resist the desire to go to see the preparations for the great jubilee soon to take place there. We therefore started together for Liège, called Lüttich in Flemish. At the railway station, where we lunched, a very pretty girl who was waiting on us consented to give us beer. I note the fact, for that was the only time we were able to get any on this trip.

I will not describe a country which you know thoroughly, and, besides, what can one see when carried along by that hippogriff of steel and iron called a locomotive? You travel dazed and dazzled; the trees flee by like a routed army; the steeples flash past pointing to the sky; there is scarcely time to note in the green meads white or red spots, that are herds of cattle, a few scale-like tiles and wisps of smoke that are villages.

In the course of a few hours I had reached Liège, the approach to which in this direction is charming indeed. It is a delightful maze of water, trees, and houses. My "vigilant," that is what a cab is called

here, did not travel so fast but that I could inspect the signs and shop names. On an old blackened monument I read the following: *This church for sale, for demolition or other purposes.*

The city folk were busy preparing for the procession; rest altars and triumphal arches adorned with figures of angels and the theological virtues in painted canvas; oriflammes and banners of guilds and of neighbouring towns filled the streets, which were black with cassocks, as twenty-nine bishops and archbishops were to be present at the ceremony. Stalls of venders of chaplets, Agnus Dei, and blessed medals were erected under the portals of every church and appeared to be doing a good business.

This outpouring of the church beyond the walls of the edifice, this Catholicism mingling familiarly with life and invading the public streets, is a curious sight for a Frenchman who is not accustomed to these external manifestations of worship. Liège thus wreathed with flowers reminded me of Corpus Christi day in the old days and recalled one of the brightest memories of my childhood.

Such were my thoughts as I visited the court of the Town Hall, surrounded with granite columns of fan-

tastic orders, no two of them being alike, and the pretty church of Saint James, which has an elegant Renaissance porch.

Not far from Liège, Serin smokes and seethes. It is there that Cockerill has his works. The forges of Lemnos, with their kings, poor Cyclops, were not much by the side of this vast establishment, always coal blackened, flaming red, and where metals flow in torrents; where iron is puddled and purified; where are manufactured these huge forgings, the steel bones of steam engines. In this place industry rises to the height of poetry and leaves far behind it the inventions of mythology.

From Liège to Verviers, the railway, piqued, no doubt at always being told that it is too fond of the level and disdains picturesque sites, has chosen, as might have been done by some old-time road, a very broken bit of country. A small stream, the Vesdre, mischievously enjoys barring constantly the path of the railway. It has to be bridged at every step, but once the bridge has been crossed, a tunnel turns up, and so on alternately. The landscape is delightful; it consists of wooded slopes, relieved with just enough rocks to be rustic without becoming wild, and diapered with

villages, country seats, and houses of pleasaunce. Through it all plays the Vesdre, producing charming effects among the willows, alders, and poplars.

A branch line runs to Aix-la-Chapelle, Charlemagne's old city. At one of the stations a curious soldier, wearing a black leather mediæval helmet, adorned with brass ornaments and a spike of the same metal, dressed in a close fitting, short blue cloth surcoat, like a knight of old starting for the crusades, asked me for my passport. I displayed it to the gaze of my warrior with purely civil grace. It was the first time the document had been of any use to me. Within a given time the railways will bring about the suppression of passports. Fancy asking for the passports of two thousand travellers passing rapidly through a city or stopping in it for half a day only! The customs also will have to be modified, in view of the impossibility of examining every piece of luggage. In ten years' time there will be nothing to stay the flight of travellers from one end of Europe to the other.

I shall not be audacious enough to speak of Aix-la-Chapelle after the illustrious author of "The Rhine." He has told us of the wonders of the Treasury and spoken of the bones of the great Charlemagne in a

style peculiarly his own. When I visited the Cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle, I was full of the monologue of Charles V in Hernani, the lines of which crowded back in my memory.

Aix-la-Chapelle, in German Aachen, is a clean and well laid out city, surrounded with handsome walks; the one called la Borcette is particularly pretty. Those who, trusting to remembrances, look for a Gothic city and quaintly carved dwellings will be disappointed. The things that most strike the traveller are the sentry-boxes, gates and posts with their diagonal black and white stripes. The theatre, adorned with an Apollo Musagetes, and in that Odeonic style from which it is impossible to escape, was closed, and confirmed me in my resolve to proceed to Cologne that very evening.

Have you ever owned a box of genuine Jean-Marie Farina eau de cologne? If you have one, look at the cut on the label and you will have an accurate idea of Cologne. The Cathedral attracts one, because workmen are busy upon it, and a Gothic cathedral, filled with modern masons, strikes one as incongruous, though nothing can be more intelligible. The sides of the square are occupied by small shops in which are sold

views of the Cathedral, both in its present and in its future condition, chaplets, devotional engravings, and books.

The woman from whom I purchased some of these engravings thought she must, no doubt in order to keep abreast of civilisation, exhibit the most Voltairian scepticism concerning her wares. Is not an unbelieving old woman selling crosses, missals, and legends full of the spirit of the Middle Ages, such as Emperor Octavian, Peter and Magdalen, Genevieve of Brabant, Grizelidis, a hideous thing?

One of my dreams was to see Rembrandt's famous painting, known as "The Night Watch;" so, taking passage on one of those steamers that go down the Rhine bearing an orchestra, I left it at Emmerich to go on its way to Nimeguen. A short branch railway that I had to get to at Arnheim that same evening, was to land me at the gates of Amsterdam. I traversed the intervening distance at the very moderate trot of a postchaise, which allowed me to admire in detail the various beauties of the landscape. Dutch postilions are eminently phlegmatic, and their horses share this tendency, so unfavourable to speed, besides appearing, like their brethren in other lands, downcast

at the introduction of the railway. These poor quadrupeds silently acknowledge themselves beaten by the locomotives and are satisfied with a pace of six miles an hour when one is forced to have recourse to them.

The moment one gets beyond the black and white striped limits of Rhenish Prussia, the appearance of the country suddenly changes. A few turns of the wheels take you into a new world. The villages look clean and well off; the houses assume Van de Velde and Van der Heyden airs; the roofs are steeply pitched and have crow-foot gables; wheels, set up on poles, invite storks to build their nests there; brick shows ruddy and joyous upon the façades with white lintels; great trees, with rich foliage, plunge their roots in pools of brown water on which are sailing squadrons of ducks. As one goes by the glance penetrates calm and restful interiors and vaguely perceives domestic scenes. On either side of the road, almost always built on an embankment, are to be seen as far as the eye can reach, meadows cut by ditches, with straggling clumps of trees, amid which wander, half hidden in the luscious grass, some of those fine cows that have made Paul Potter famous.

Beyond Arnheim, as far as I could judge in the growing darkness and while proceeding more rapidly by train, the character of the country is strange; the meadows become barer and partake of the nature of barrens and steppes; the vegetation blasted by the salt air is poorer, the sand hills, those feeble barriers opposed to the storms of Ocean, draw nearer. Yet the landscape, diversified here and there by the outline of a tree, has a certain grandeur, especially when seen in the purple mists of evening.

It was pitch dark when the train reached the station. Then all the Dutch in the carriages, giving the lie to their proverbial reputation for slowness and phlegm, seized upon their parcels with more than Southern vivacity and started on a run for the city, while the drivers of the local cabs whipped up their nags and drove them at full gallop; it looked exactly like the rout of an army hotly pursued. The mystery was soon explained; a great gate, one of the leaves of which closed so suddenly upon me that I was nearly caught in it, was the cause of the hurrying; the hour for the closing of the city gates had struck.

My vehicle was bearing me rapidly towards an hotel the name of which had been given me, and I strove,

as I bent out of the window, to make out some of the aspects of the unknown city I was traversing.

Amsterdam, seen at night, presents a most quaint and striking aspect. To a stranger the lines of great trees, the rows of houses with high gables, the canals, the black, oily, sleepy waters of which reflect in long streams the lights of the shops and the windows, the silhouettes of bridges and locks, the masts and rigging unexpectedly lighted by some stray beam, combine to form a mysterious and fairy-like ensemble, which seems to belong to dreamland rather than to reality. Nor does that impression disappear with daylight, for Amsterdam is one of the quaintest of cities. Situated on the Zuyderzee, on the banks of that arm of the sea called the Y, the Dutch Venice spreads out in the shape of a crescent. A sort of fan of canals opens out between the houses and imparts to it a peculiar physiognomy. Looking towards the harbour, the prospect is usually as follows: a canal vanishing between two rows of ancient trees, and houses with crow-foot gables or volutes; in the distance, a water-mill with its ruff of woodwork, and a steeple quaintly bulbous, in the Moscovite taste, recalling the turrets of the Kremlin; in the foreground a foot-bridge, a draw-bridge, the

beams of which try to look like gibbets, boats with red sails, their tarry sterns adorned with a stripe of that pretty apple-green that Camille Roqueplan and William Wylde know so well how to reproduce, and a swarm of sailors, fishermen, peasant women, and porters handling bales.

It being yet too early for the Museum to be opened, I had myself driven at hap-hazard through the town, and everywhere I met with the same stamp of originality. Many of the garden fences are of boards placed transversely and tarred over. A ditch, covered with those small lentil-like plants that give a verdigrised tone to sleeping waters, runs along the houses which do not stand on the banks of a canal. The charming dwellings I passed mingled in delightful proportions Chinese fancifulness and Dutch exactness.

If at times the Javanese look of a pavilion surprises one, the remembrance soon recurs that Amsterdam has long enriched itself in Batavia. By their love for porcelain, lacquer and varnish, by their scrupulous cleanliness, their patient ways, their taste for flowers, painting, and odds and ends, the Dutch are uncommonly like the inhabitants of the Celestial Empire. It is from Holland that the Chinese obtain nowadays the

craquelé céladons, the verrucose bronzes, the web-like ivories, the idols of jade and pagodite, and the screens with relief designs the secret of which they have lost. All the porcelain manufactured for the past two hundred years in Pekin is to be found in Amsterdam.

In the course of my drive I had noticed a large number of wreaths of foliage adorned with gilt paper and tinsel, from which depended little tin fishes. I was told that it was in celebration of the herring having struck in. As a matter of fact the herring is one of the sources of the wealth of Holland, and the city was right to rejoice. Strange indeed is this migration of fish that start from the Pole at a fixed date and go forth to pile themselves up in the salt barrels of every nation bordering on the ocean.

The dress of the citizens of Amsterdam in nowise differs from that of the Parisians or of the Londoners. The women of the middle classes have but one characteristic garment, a jacket that falls very low and forms a sort of coat. It is almost always of cheap lilac print; lilac, indeed, appeared to me to be the favourite colour of the Low Countries. It might even be thought to exclude every other shade, were there

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Russian Peasant Girl.

not some pink exceptions, few in number, it is true, to prove that fancy is admissible in the matter of jackets. It is perhaps puerile to remark that all the women have the same shape of nose, long, white, and rather turned up, with very wide nostrils. A mould could not give more identical copies. I draw the attention of future tourists to this fact. For the rest the women are pretty enough, and recall the types consecrated by Gerard Dow: plump fairness and gentle sadness.

A few peasant women from the isles of the Zuyderzee and from the provinces more remote from the invasion of new ideas, wear the splendid headdress worthy of a mediæval queen, which consists of silver lace and gold plates placed on the temples, and which is at once most graceful and noble.

One thing which surprises the traveller is the wheelless vehicle, the Dutch name of which escapes me, placed on a sledge, like quarter casks of beer with us. These peculiar vehicles are becoming rarer, and will soon have wholly disappeared. One is also struck by the huge size and strange shape of the horses, that are shod with a sort of pattens that increases their height by several inches. Their arched heads, their monstrous

cruppers, their swelling necks, their hoofs covered with huge masses of hair, their wild manes and their long tails recall the equestrian portraits by Van Dyck, the battle-scenes by Van der Meulen, the hunting-scenes by Parrocel and Lauterbourg. In France these powerful Frisian and Mecklenburg breeds are now rarely met with.

It was now ten o'clock and the Museum was open. In a few minutes I should be gazing upon the splendid masterpiece of the great master.

The first thing that catches the eye as one ascends the stairs in the Museum at Amsterdam, is a gigantic swan, with wings displayed, feathers ruffled, beak half opened, in an attitude at once anxious and protecting. Although a divine soul breathes under the snowy whiteness of the noble bird, it is not intended to be an incarnation of Jupiter going to seduce Leda; the painter, Asselyn, sought to symbolise in this emblem the vigilance of the Grand Pensioner, Jean De Witt. I found this out from the guide book; I could never have made it out for myself. But never did Snyders or Jordaens paint a finer picture.

"The Night Watch," the largest work ever painted by Rembrandt, fills almost the whole of one side of a

room that might be better lighted. To remedy this, the painting is mounted on a bracket that allows the picture to be drawn from the wall until the right light has been obtained.

Before I speak of this marvel, it may not be out of place to tell under what circumstances it was painted and what is the theme the artist has treated.

If there be anything that confirms the theory I have so often put forth and maintained, namely, that to painters of true genius the subject is a matter of utmost indifference, it is assuredly the wondrous painting in the Museum at Amsterdam. Its name, "The Night Watch," might lead people who have not seen it, to imagine that it represents some mysterious and fantastic scene, a nightmare of shadow and terror such as Rembrandt sketched so well; but there is nothing so poetical about it; the picture merely represents the assembling of the National Guard of the day.

If one looks up Wagenaar, the author of a history of Amsterdam, one finds that the militia was ordered, on May 4, 1642, to be ready for a review that was to take place on the evening of the 19th, under penalty of twenty-five guldens fine in case of absence. The object was to receive the Prince of Orange who was to

arrive accompanied by the daughter of Charles I of England, whom he had just taken in marriage. It surely was impossible to give a painter a more insignificant and more prosaic subject. Modern efforts along this line suffice to indicate what such a subject now brings forth. It must be borne in mind also that it was necessary to put the big wigs of the militia well in front, and to attain resemblance in the case of each and every one, for most of these faces are portraits, and the queer names of their owners have been preserved.

It may be assumed that all these worthies had not received written summonses to turn out, or else that the use of such notices was unknown in the good city of Amsterdam, for the beat of the drum seems to have surprised them in the midst of their occupations: they are hurrying as though a single minute's delay would involve the fine of twenty-five gulden; they rush forth half dressed; one man is buttoning his jacket, and another is drawing on his gloves as he goes. The whole scene is filled with infinite movement, disorder, and rush. The Spartans under Leonidas did not spring to arms to defend the Thermopylæ with greater courage than these worthy and debonair Dutch citizens going to meet the Prince of Orange.

You are aware of the fanciful taste of the Leyden miller's son in the matter of the costumes he puts on his figures; well, he never was more amazingly startling than in this inoffensive meeting of militia-men. It is true that the costumes of the day lent themselves more readily to painting than do those of our times. The jackets of embroidered leather, the points, the wide-topped boots, the helmets, the breastplates, the neckplates, the broad baldrics, the swords with heavy shell guards, all these, even when worn by a militia-man, may furnish opportunities to the brush of a skilful painter. What Rembrandt has made of them is absolutely prodigious; never was the fury of execution carried to such a pitch; there is a temerity in the work of the brush, a craze of impasto of which Decamps' most violent sketches do not give even a faint idea. Some of the gold lace is modelled in full relief; some of the foreshortened fingers have been done at one stroke of the brush, while there are noses that fairly stand out of the canvas. It is at once the strangest thing and one that redounds to the glory of Rembrandt that this execution so incredible in its brutality, is at the same time extremely delicate. It is a finish obtained by fisticuffs and kicks, but such as the

most careful painters have never been able to attain. From the chaos of broken touches, from the tumult of shadows and lights, from the masses of colour cast on as if at hap-hazard, there springs supreme harmony.

Rembrandt, who, of all men, assuredly cared least for the Greeks and Romans, and whose mighty triviality accepts unhesitatingly the meanest aspects of nature, does not, on that account, as might easily be believed, lack style and elevation of thought. By means of the peculiar accent he imparts even to the objects he has most faithfully reproduced, by the romantic quaintness of his costumes, and the deep thoughtfulness of even the ugliest faces he paints, he attains a monstrous beauty more easily felt than described. His work has a formidable character that brings it up to the level of all masterpieces. The fantastic and masterly manner in which he handles light and shade, the sublime effects of chiaroscuro which he evolves, make of him as poetical an artist as ever lived. All he needs to move you and make you thoughtful for a whole day is an old man rising from his arm-chair, and a star scintillating against a dark background.

These worthy Dutchmen have been provided by his brush with curled up mustaches and beards, bristling

eyebrows, hands on hips, martial poses and hectoring airs. Never did condottieri, landsknechts, or Stradiotes look more surlily grim; Salvator Rosa's brigands look like peaceful citizens by the side of these worthy militia-men. The drummer, in particular, is beating his drum with relentless fierceness, while he casts glances fit to make the earth quake with terror. On the other hand nothing can be more engaging, more fair, more golden than the little maid dressed in yellow seen through an almost inextricable collection of legs and arms.

This painting, so Wagenaar further tells us, adorned, as late as 1764, the court room of the aforesaid militia. What a pleasure it must have been in those days to fail to report for guard duty! A man was summoned before the court, and while he was being tried could gaze undisturbed upon the wondrous painting hung behind the bench of judges. Times have changed indeed! Where is the militia regiment that would dream of ordering a picture of Delacroix and hanging it up in its court room?

This brilliant painting bears the date of 1642, at which time Rembrandt had attained mature age and the full ripeness of his talent. It is a strange fact that

the earlier paintings of the Dutch painter are quiet, polished and finished in execution, of a light, fair colour, and reposeful in effect. As he grows older he warms up, instead of cooling down; instead of becoming more careful, he lets himself go; instead of attenuating, he exaggerates. Having completely mastered technique, he yields to his fancy; day by day his originality develops and becomes more striking; he works over the thick, dark colour with his lion claws and with incredible ferocity; his mane becomes wilder and more and more tawny and ruddy; no cavern, however pitchy dark, now has terrors for him; he plunges boldly in, sure that with a single touch he will light up the darkness as with a torch.

Fine indeed is it to watch a master to whom advancing age gives whatever it takes from others. Happy the artist who listens not to the timid counsels of prudence and who becomes bolder and bolder at the very time when the most fiery cool down, and, upborne by an inflexible conviction, carries his originality to the extreme of fury and even extravagance. No painter, no poet has said his last word. Strong and glorious are those who persistently seek to know themselves, who reject from their own nature whatever it may

hold of undefined and commonplace, and who develop their special qualities without caring for the clamours of the critics and the bridling up of the bourgeois.

There is also in this Museum another painting by Rembrandt: "The Syndics of the Cloth Market," a work of the first rank and so superbly painted that it would compel attention for a whole day, but for the fact that the "Night Watch" stands near it, eclipsing everything else in the gallery and depriving you at one and the same time of the desire and the ability to look at anything else.

That evening, still dazzled by the masterpiece, I was wandering by one of the great canals that run into the harbour, and met a canvas sentry-box walking along. It was the local Punch and Judy which, having no doubt failed to secure an audience, was sadly wending its way home. The impresario's wife accompanied the theatre and guided it on its way. I signed to her to stop, and made her understand, by a continuous pantomime of coin, that I desired to enjoy an immediate and special performance of the immortal drama that no poet has succeeded in equalling.

The Dutch Punch, or Punchinello, is utterly

unlike the type generally known by that name; he wears a black mustache, no hump or but a small one, and has a rascally air peculiarly his own. He thrashes his wife, his friend, his neighbours, the charcoal burner, the knife grinder; he fights the devil, the police officer, the executioner; in a twinkling the front of the box is covered with a heap of dead and wounded. So far, the behaviour of the Dutch Punch is nothing out of the common, but at this point the drama becomes of terrifying proportions and attains a depth of thought worthy of the second part of "Faust." The victorious Punch strides across the field of battle, indulging in the mad hilarity and the disorderly gestures characteristic of triumphant heroes, when there suddenly appears a little doll brilliantly dressed in gauze and tinsel, that takes to dancing a polka and smiting Punch so hard with the tip of her foot, that he soon falls lifeless upon the bodies of his victims. Punch dead, the dancer starts upon a prodigiously rapid waltz, leaves the ground and whirls herself into the heavens.

So, mighty Punchinello, who fearedst neither thy wife, nor the police, nor the executioner, nor the devil himself, thou art cast down and destroyed by a polka, and

a slim doll has proved mightier than all the powers of earth and heaven!

After the "Night Watch" I was bound to see "Doctor Tulp's Lesson of Anatomy," which is in the Hague Museum. A dashing sketch by my friend Chenavard, to say nothing of the engraving of it met with everywhere, had filled me with the liveliest desire to behold the original. I therefore took the train for the Hague; the line running along the inland gulf called the Harlem Zee.

It is impossible to imagine anything more smiling, more dainty, cleaner or better kept than the little houses with their bright red roofs that shine amid their green gardens like apis on moss. One cannot help saying to one's self: "How gladly would I end my days in one of these lovely homes;" so surely does it seem that one must necessarily be happy in them. One forgets that all these pretty places are undermined by water, from which they have been reclaimed by the large use of piles, and that lurks in those verdant, undulating meads that form a velvet mantle for the alluvial mud soil.

The Hague, which I reached that evening, is an uncommonly picturesque city; the trees, houses and

canals appear to have been arranged for the special delectation of water-colour painters. In particular there are water-lanes bordered by gardens and fanciful buildings of the most charming effect. The palace, which was pointed out to me, is remarkable only for its simplicity. Among the pictures it contains, almost all by modern artists, my attention was drawn to a number painted by a dark-skinned Polynesian prince who had been sent to Europe to be educated. He was called Radin-Saleh. A very characteristic soldier's head and lions fighting over a prostrate buffalo, painted by him, struck me by the vigour and dash of the touch.

Opposite the palace rises a sort of modern Gothic castle, in front of which has been set up the Count de Niewkerke's bronze statue of William the Silent. This equestrian statue looks infinitely better at the Hague than it did in Paris. The courtyard of this neo-mediæval building is full of Senegal storks, crested herons and other rare birds.

Pictures are late risers in Holland, so, while waiting for the opening of the Museum, I went to visit the park that surrounds the Summer Palace, although the weather was turning to rain. Imagine huge trees, mostly ash and elms, whose roots are almost always

in the water and which outspread their rich green foliage over ponds, lakes, and streams whose tranquil surface cradles their sombre reflections; duckweed, water-lilies, all the cold family of aquatic plants fill the ditches cut by the side of the roads; a cool moisture freshens the air even when the heat is greatest and imparts to the vegetation an extraordinary vigour. At every group of picturesquely twisted trunks, at every azure perspective through the thick foliage, at every sheaf of plants bending under the weight of the dew, I said to myself: "If only the French landscape painter who succeeded in discovering such marvellous sites in the park at Saint-Cloud were here!"

The Residence is the most delightful dwelling that ever poet dreamed of; unfortunately poets never behold the realisation of their dreams. There was one drawing-room in particular, hung with Chinese tapestries of exquisite and fabulous beauty, the subjects of which were the four Seasons, represented by the various agricultural pursuits proper to each of them. In another room were birds embroidered in relief upon a background of white satin. Fairies themselves could not have worked them more daintily and delicately; it was nature itself imitated with that superabundance of

arabesques and perspective of which the learned ignorance of the Chinese alone possesses the secret.

The hall, which is more than forty feet in height from the ceiling to the floor, is painted from top to bottom with allegorical designs in honour of the House of Nassau, by Jordaens and pupils of Rubens. It is unique in its way. There are perfect avalanches of golden hair, of pink and white flesh, streams of nude women that would scandalise the æsthetic school of Overbeck. When the Flemish painters of that day had the chance to indulge in theological virtues and symbolical figures, they did so to their hearts' content. It is really most comical and amazing to see what Prudence, Chastity, Good Faith, Justice and other substantives personified for the benefit of princes who wish to have their palaces decorated, become under their sensual brushes. Happily these men were thoroughly acquainted with all the resources of the palette, and the beauty of the execution prevents one thinking of the æsthetic side of their work.

There is especially a triumphal entry of some prince or other of the dynasty, painted by Jordaens *propria manu*, and which is unquestionably the most astounding mêlée of naked women, lions and horses, that ever

roared upon the length of a peaceful wall; the torrent of satiny flesh, golden manes, bluish quarters, cheeks as ruddy as if they were about to burst into flames, produces the strangest possible effect. I admit unrestricted fancy, but it is really impossible to perceive in this work anything that looks like a prince of Nassau or Orange. It is true that the painting is a wonder, which at once destroys the value of my criticism.

The rain, which had been threatening since the morning, now began to fall, first in drops, then in buckets, then in pools, and finally in cataracts; bands of toads joyously hopped over the soaked sand of the walks, and the water seemed to leap from the ground to meet the rain. I found a temporary refuge in a little café, situated in the centre of the park; and while a carriage was being fetched, I watched the handsome emerald leaves shining under the drops as the dust of June was being washed off them by the beneficent shower; I admired the white trunks, polished like pillars, and spotted here and there with pretty patches of moss; and this with the greater wonder because I had just been told that the vast and shady park was like a forest planted on a floor, the soil being so marshy, so shifting, so interpenetrated by water, that it had been

necessary to stiffen it by means of a wooden flooring covered with a layer of loam.

The carriage came up, and a quarter of an hour later I was in presence of "Doctor Tulp's Lesson of Anatomy." The painting is so completely different in aspect from the "Night Watch," that at first sight it might well be supposed to be the work of another master. When Rembrandt painted it, he was only twenty-six! It is a masterpiece, and a quiet masterpiece.

Placed in the amphitheatre of the School of Surgery, the painting remained there until 1828, when the worthy idiots of the day proposed to sell it by auction for the benefit of some charity or another. The day was fixed and the masterpiece was no doubt about to be lost to Holland, when the King forbade the sale, gave the surgeons thirty-two thousand florins, and had the superb painting hung in the Hall of Honour in the Museum at the Hague.

Doctor Nicholas Tulp, who, it appears, presented the College with the "Lesson of Anatomy," is surrounded by seven distinguished personages of the day: Jacob Block, Hartmann, Andriaan Salbran, Jacob de Witt, Matthys Kalkoen, Jacob Koelveld, and Franz

Leonen, who are listening to an anatomical demonstration by the learned professor with admirable intensity of attention.

It is the simplest and most striking of compositions, while at the same time it is not a composition at all. A foreshortened body, the breast well lighted and the legs in shadow, is stretched upon a table. The professor, standing by, raises the muscles of the arm with a pair of surgical pincers, and is apparently describing them. The dead body, pale and bloodless, surrounded by these grave personages, with fair beards and faces that are pleasant and intelligent notwithstanding their sinister occupation, fixes itself in the memory in indelible fashion.

In this work the manner of the painter is sober, restrained, precise. He has made no use of impasto, high lights or visible touches; all is soft, melting, and polished. There is not to be found in this picture the warm, vaporous, shadowing tint that gilds and veils the other works of the master; but how sure of himself he is already, how deeply learned and how strong in his moderation.

This "Lesson of Anatomy" strikes me as being one of the masterpieces the study of which would be

in the highest degree profitable to young painters of the Colourist school. Thanks to the wondrous spell of art, that hideous subject which, in reality, would make any one but a surgeon turn away his eyes, holds and fascinates you for hours at a time, though nothing is dodged, nothing dissimulated and frank horror could not be carried farther.

I must not forget a "Susannah at the Bath," a sketch or a replica on a smaller scale, with a few changes, of the magnificent life size "Susannah," that was exhibited for a short time at Susse's and purchased by M. Paul Périer.

Paul Potter's great picture, representing a bull, and the reputation of which is world-wide, did not impress me quite as favourably as it should have. I have seen such proud handsome bulls in Spain that this cottony animal failed to delight me.

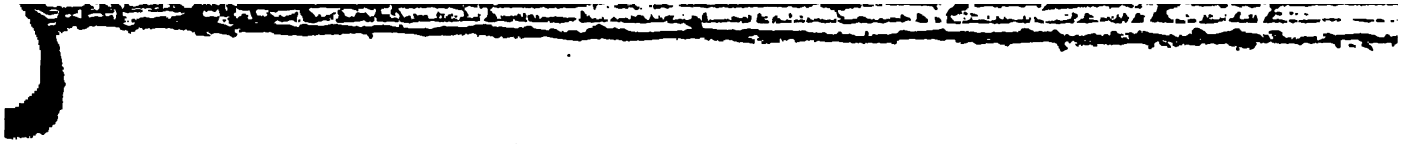
An "Eden," by Paradise Breughel, and "Adam and Eve," by Rubens, and the portraits of that artist's two wives, are works one cannot help looking at, even when one has resolved, as I had, to look but at one single painting by a single chosen master.

On the ground floor of the Museum of Painting there is displayed the greatest collection of Chinese

curiosities, barbaric weapons, and other oddities. Everything is to be found there, even authentic sirens and fauns.

From the Hague I went to Rotterdam, passing through Delft and Schiedam, in order to catch the steamer that was to take me to England by way of the Meuse and the Thames. The sea passage would take about thirty hours, but I had seen the "Night Watch" and the "Lesson of Anatomy," and in this world you must pay for everything; Napoleon himself said so.

A Day in London



A DAY IN LONDON

I HAD spent the night at a masked ball, and there is nothing so depressing as the morning after a ball. I therefore came to a sudden decision and resolved to treat my complaint homeopathically; so within a few hours, having barely got rid of my caftans, poniards, and Turkish rig, I was on my way to London, the native place of spleen.

Perfidious Albion met me in the stage-coach, in the shape of four Englishmen surrounded and fortified with all manner of instruments of comfort, and not knowing a word of French, so that my English trip began without delay. At Boulogne, a town wholly Anglicised, I was compelled to have recourse to a pathetic pantomime in order to make the people understand that I was hungry and sleepy, and that I wanted supper and a bed. At last they fetched a dragoman who translated my requests, and I managed to eat and sleep. English only is understood in Boulogne. I do not know whether, on the other hand, French is the idiom spoken by the inhabitants of Dover, but I do not believe it is. I have already noticed several times

on our frontiers this invasion of the customs and speech of our neighbours. The sort of faint tint that, on maps and in reality, separates nations, is washed out on the French side rather than on that of the next kingdom. Thus, all the Channel seaboard is English; Alsace is German on its edges; Flanders is Belgian; Provence Italian, and Gascony Spanish. A man who knows pure Parisian only is often hard put to it in these provinces, and if the frontier be crossed, not a single trace of French is to be found.

At six in the morning I stood on the deck of the "Harlequin" steamer. Do not look for a description of a storm, in which Neptune makes his appearance with a green beard and urges on his sea-coursers. The Channel, which is said to be so capricious and stormy, was as clement to me as was the Mediterranean in old days, though, of course, the Mediterranean is but a sky set upside down, and just as blue and as limpid as the other.

Two or three hours later, a white line, resembling a cloud, arose out of the azure main: it was the coast of England, which owes its name Albion to the colour of its shores. The immense precipitous cliff, steep like the wall of a fortification, is Shakespeare's Cliff;

the two little black dots are the openings of a railway viaduct in course of construction; at the foot of the bay is Dover with its tower which, it is claimed, may be seen from Boulogne in clear weather — but it never is clear weather. The day was very fine; there was not a cloud in the sky, yet a diadem of dense vapour crowned the brows of Old England. The country, so far as it was visible, looked, though denuded by winter, neat, clean, well cared for, carefully raked over; the chalk cliffs, precipitous as walls, and at the feet of which the sea hollows out caves for the benefit of smugglers, heightened the regularity of the prospect. Here and there showed mansions and cottages in strange styles of architecture, with huge towers, crenelated walls, covered with ivy and broken down in places, and, at the distance at which we were, resembling Gothic castles so closely that the mistake was pardonable. These various citadels and donjons with drawbridges and battlements, provided even with cannon and culverin in bronzed wood, give to the shore line a rather picturesquely grim and bristly look, though internally they are furnished with the most refined luxury. There was pointed out to me, standing in the centre of a great park, a white house with

Gothic finials, though of modern construction, which belongs to an enormously wealthy Jew, Mr. Moses Montefiore, who recently accompanied M. Crémieux to the East in connection with the question of the Damascus Jews. From this point the coast line curves up to Ramsgate. Within the curve lies Deal, the landing place of the Romans, it is said, on their first descent into England. I see no reason why it should not be the spot. Next is seen Walmer Castle, the seat of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, a dignity now held by the Duke of Wellington. Then comes Sandwich, and a little farther on Ramsgate, a pleasure resort of Londoners, the straight streets and tall houses of which seem to run right into the water. All this is beautiful, no doubt, yet the real prospect, the view so fine that one does not care for any other, is not that on the land but that on the sea.

In the Downs, opposite Deal, more than two hundred wind-bound vessels are waiting for a favourable breeze in order to get out of the Strait; some are coming, others going; they are everlastingly on the move. Whichever way one turns, the smoke of steamers and the dark or bright silhouettes of ships are seen against the sky line. Everything indicates the

approach to the Babylon of the seas. On the French side there is absolute solitude: not a ship, not a steamer. The farther one goes the greater the crowd of vessels. The horizon is filled with them; sails swell like domes, masts rise like spires, the rigging forms a maze; it looks like a vast Gothic city afloat; like a Venice that has dragged its anchors and is coming to meet one. The lightships, their scarlet sides showing by day, their red lights by night, point out the way to these flocks of vessels whose sails are their fleeces. These have come from the Indies, manned by a crew of Lascars; those are homeward bound from the Northern seas, and the ice on their sides has not yet had time to melt. Here are China and America bringing their tea and sugar, but in the multitude, the British ships are always recognisable by their sails, dark as those of Theseus' ship leaving for Crete, a sombre livery of mourning they owe to the wretched London climate.

The Thames, or rather the estuary into which its waters flow, is so wide and the banks themselves so low that these cannot be seen from the centre of the stream. It is only after steaming many a mile that one at last makes them out, narrow, flat, black lines

between the gray sky and the turbid water. The narrower the river becomes, the more compact grows the crowd of vessels; the paddles of the steamers that ascend or descend lash the waters constantly and pitilessly; the smoke that issues from their iron funnels mingles its black plumes and forms new banks of clouds in the heavens that could very well dispense with this addition. The sun, if the sun showed in London, would be darkened by them. On every hand are heard the groans and the hissings of the lungs of the engines, from out whose iron nostrils issue jets of boiling steam.

It is most painful to listen to these strident, asthmatic breathings; to the groans of matter at bay and driven to despair; it seems to complain and to call for mercy, like a worn out slave whom an inhuman master overburdens with work. I am well aware that manufacturers will laugh at me, yet I am not far from sharing the views of the Emperor of China, who proscribes steamers as an obscene, barbarous, and immoral invention. I think it is an impious thing to torment in such fashion God's creation, and I believe Dame Nature will one day avenge herself for the ill treatment she has to put up with at the hands of her too avid children.

Besides steamers, sailing-vessels, brigs, schooners, frigates, from the huge three-master to the simple fishing-boat, to the punt in which two people can scarce find sitting room, follow each other uninterruptedly and unceasingly, forming an endless naval pageant in which every nation in the world is represented. All these craft come and go, ascend or descend, cross each other and avoid each other in orderly confusion, presenting the most marvellous spectacle which it is given to man to behold, especially when one is fortunate enough, as I was, to see it enlivened and gilded by the rays of the sun.

On the banks of the river, now drawing nearer, I could make out trees, houses crouching on the bank, one foot in the water and the hand extended to seize the merchandise as it passed; ship-yards with immense sheds and the ribs of vessels in course of construction, resembling the skeletons of cachalots, showing strange against the sky. A forest of colossal chimney shafts, in the form of towers, of columns, of pylons, of obelisks, gave the sky line an Egyptian look, a most extraordinary resemblance to the distant outline of Thebes, of Babylon, of an antediluvian city, of the capital of awful sins and of the revolts of pride. In-

dustry, on such a scale, attains almost to poetry, to a poetry with which nature has nothing to do, and which is the result of the mighty development of human will.

Above Gravesend, the lower limit of the port of London, warehouses, foundries, and ship-yards are crowded together more closely, draw nearer each other and are heaped one upon another in most picturesque irregularity. On the left swell the two domes of the Royal Naval Hospital, Greenwich, through the colonnade of which is perceived a background of park with great trees most charming in effect. Seated on the benches in the peristyles, the pensioners watch the coming and going of the ships, of the remembrance of which they are full and which form the staple of their conversations, while the salt odour of the brine still delights their nostrils. Sir Christopher Wren was the architect of this fine building. Local passenger steamers start every fifteen minutes from Greenwich and London simultaneously. Greenwich is opposite the Isle of Dogs, or rather the Peninsula of Dogs, where the Thames turns back on its course and forms an elbow that has been cleverly turned to account. Here are the East India Company's docks. The

West India docks, very much less large and less frequented, are on the right, at the centre of the curve formed by the river and a little below it.

The East India docks are so enormous, gigantic, and fabulously large as to overpass human proportions. They are a work of Cyclops and Titans. Above the houses, warehouses, slopes, stairs, and innumerable hybrid buildings that obstruct the approaches to the river, rises a prodigious avenue of ships' masts prolonged indefinitely; an inextricable maze of rigging, spars, and ropes that would put to shame, as far as the density of interlacing goes, the most abundant creepers in an American virgin forest. This is where is built, caulked, and hauled up that innumerable fleet of vessels that sail in search of the riches of the world, and then pour them into that bottomless gulf of wretchedness and luxury called London. The East India docks can accommodate three hundred ships. A canal, called the City Canal, running parallel to the docks and which makes the peninsula into the Isle of Dogs, shortens by three or four miles the distance round the curve.

The Commercial docks, on the opposite shore, the London docks and the Saint Catherine's docks, below

the Tower, are no less wonderful. At the Commercial docks are the largest cellars in the world; it is there that are stored the wines of Spain and Portugal. And I have not included in this enumeration private docks and basins; every minute from out of a group of houses emerges the hull of a vessel; the yards poke into the windows, the gaffs penetrate into the rooms, and the dolphin-strikers seem to be smiting the warehouse doors like battering-rams of old. Houses and ships live on a footing of the most cordial and touching intimacy; when the tide is high, the courts and yards of the houses turn into basins and welcome vessels. Stairs, slopes, and basins of stone, of granite, of brick, ascend and descend from the river to the houses. A regular quay would spoil the familiarity of the river and the city; so picturesqueness is the gainer, for there is nothing so horrible as those everlasting straight lines, prolonged in spite of all, of which modern civilisation is so stupidly fond.

England is but one vast ship-yard; London is but a seaport. The sea is an Englishman's natural home; indeed these people enjoy it so much that many noblemen spend their lives sailing on perilous voyages in small vessels fitted out and commanded by themselves.

The Royal Yacht Squadron's sole purpose is to encourage this taste and afford opportunities for its development. The English dislike the land so much that they have installed a hospital in the very centre of the Thames, in a large ship, razeed, to which sailors falling sick while in London are taken. The opinion expressed by Tom Coffin, in Fenimore Cooper's novel, "The Pilot," namely, that the land is good only for the purpose of replenishing the stores and filling up with water, cannot strike the English as exaggerated.

The fronts of all these houses look out upon the river, for the Thames is the main street of London, the arterial vein whence diverge the branches that bear the life blood to the body of the city. Wonderful therefore is the wealth of signs and notices! The buildings are bedizened from attic to cellar with letters of every size and colour; the capitals often are a story in height, for they have to be readable across a sheet of water seven or eight times as wide as the Seine. The glance rests upon the acroter of a curiously traceried house, and you wonder to what order of architecture it belongs. So far as charlatanry in advertising goes, the English are unrivalled, and I advise our people to take a trip to London to convince

themselves of the fact that they are nowhere in comparison. The aspect of the houses thus adorned, placarded, streaked with inscriptions and posters, seen from the river, is quaint indeed.

I was greatly surprised to behold intact, externally at least, the Tower which on the faith of the accounts in the newspapers, I had believed burned to the ground and reduced to ashes. It has lost nothing of its ancient appearance. It still stands, with its high walls, its sinister look and its low archway, the Traitors' Gate, under which a black boat, gloomier than the bark of Charon, brought in the guilty and took away the condemned to death. The Tower is not, as its name would seem to indicate, a solitary donjon, an isolated belfry, but a regular Bastile, a cluster of towers connected by walls, a fortress surrounded by moats fed from the Thames, with guns and drawbridges; a mediæval fortress, at least as serious as our own Vincennes, and which contains a chapel, a menagerie, a Treasury, an arsenal, and many another curiosity.

We were nearing the end of our voyage; a few revolutions of the paddle-wheels and the steamer would range alongside the Custom House wharf, where our trunks would be examined on the following day only,

the Sunday being as scrupulously observed in London as the Jewish Sabbath in Jerusalem.

Never shall I forget the splendid prospect outspread before me. The gigantic arches of London Bridge spanned the river in five tremendous spans, and stood out black against the sunset sky. The disk of the sun, blazing like a shield made red hot in the furnace, was setting exactly behind the centre arch that cut upon its orb an incomparably bold and strong segment. A long stream of fire glittered and quivered upon the lipping waves; mist and smoke filled the space up to Southwark Bridge, the arches of which showed faintly through the haze. To the right and somewhat in the distance, shone the flames of gilded bronze that crown the giant pillar erected in memory of the Great Fire of 1666; on the left the steeple of Saint Olave's shot up above the roofs; monumental chimneys, that might well have been taken for votive columns were Ionic or Doric capitals accustomed to vomit forth smoke, broke the lines of the horizon in the happiest way, their vigorous tones bringing out still more strongly the orange and pale citron shades of the heavens.

On turning round I saw a perfect City on the Waters, with its quarters and its streets formed of

ships, for it is at this bridge, the lowest down the river, that ships stop; up to that point the communication between the two banks is kept up by boats. The tunnel, between Rotherhithe and Wapping, will do away with this inconvenience when it is completed, that is in two or three months' time. The great difficulty was to construct slopes that would enable vehicles to descend so low. It had been overcome by a series of circular ways with a gradient of only four feet in one hundred. As it was not possible to build a bridge under which vessels could pass, it was determined to put the bridge under the ships and the river. This bold idea was conceived in the brain of a Frenchman, Brunel. The two galleries forming the tunnel are entirely round, that being the form which presents the greatest resistance. The lower portion of the circle has been filled up to a level for the passage of vehicles; the lateral walls are concave. The centre wall is pierced by small arches which allow pedestrians to pass from one part of the tunnel to the other. The length of the tunnel is thirteen hundred feet, and the upper portion of the archway is fifteen feet below the bed of the river.

We landed. As I did not know a word of English,

I wondered somewhat how I should find the person to whom I was recommended. I had written very carefully on a card the name of the street and the number of the house, and showed it to a cabman who, fortunately, could read, and off he went at lightning speed. The jokes about the slowness of cab horses, very appropriate in Paris, would be entirely out of place here, where hackney carriages drive as fast as the best horses of our private carriages. The cab in which I was seated, and which nearly corresponded to our own citadines, was of the shape most fashionable in Paris at the present time: very low wheels, the door straight and square like the leaf of a cupboard door, and the general appearance of a Sedan chair on casters. This style of carriage, which is the very acme of elegance with us, is confined, in London, to hackney coaches. The interior is upholstered in plain American cloth. The driver tips a penny to the poor devil who opens the door, which is not the case in France, where it is the passenger who pays the groom. The fare is at the rate of a shilling a mile, and increases in proportion to the distance traversed. To be done with cabs, let me add that the most peculiar I have seen are a sort of very low cabriolet, on which the driver does not sit

by the side of the passenger, as in our tax-cabs, nor in front, as on our four-wheelers, but behind, where the footman usually sits; the reins pass over the hood and the man drives from over your head. These minor details will no doubt strike lovers of æsthetic discussions, sworn admirers of monuments and valuators of antiquities as being very insignificant, yet it is precisely these facts that make one people different from another and enable you to realise that you are in London and not in Paris.

While my cab was rapidly traversing the streets that separate the Custom House from High Holborn, I kept looking out of the windows and marvelling at the amazing silence and solitude of the quarters through which I was passing. The place looked like a dead city, like one of those cities peopled with petrified inhabitants of which Eastern tales tell. Every shop was closed and not a single human face showed at any window. Scarcely did a stray passer-by sneak past like a shadow. This gloomy and deserted aspect formed such a contrast with the bustling, busy London I had imagined, that I could not recover from my surprise. At last I recollected that it was Sunday and that I had been told that London Sundays were the very ideal of

ennui. That day, which is with us, at least so far as the popular element is concerned, a day of joy, of walks abroad, of dress, of feasting and dancing, is, on the other side of the Channel, a day of deepest gloom. The taverns close at midnight on the Saturday, the theatres give no performances, the shops are hermetically closed, and the man who has not taken care to get in his supplies on the previous evening would find it very difficult to get anything to eat; life seems to be suspended, and the wheels of London cease revolving, like those of a clock when the pendulum is stopped. For fear of profaning the dominical solemnity, London dare not budge and scarcely ventures to breathe even. On that day, after having heard a sermon by the preacher of the sect to which he belongs, every good Englishman shuts himself up within his house to meditate over the Bible, to offer up to God his feeling of boredom, and to enjoy, in front of a blazing fire the happiness of being neither a Frenchman nor a Papist, which is to him a source of unending bliss. At midnight the spell is broken, life, suspended for a time, is felt again, the houses reopen, the blood courses anew through the veins of the mighty frame that had fallen into a lethargy.

A DAY IN LONDON

The next day, pretty early, I started through the city, quite alone, as is my wont in a foreign country; for above all I hate having a guide who compels me to look at everything I do not want to see and makes me pass by everything that interests me. I carefully avoid monuments and what are called *the beauties* of a place. Monuments are usually composed of pillars, pediments, attics and other architectural parts which engravings and drawings reproduce with the utmost fidelity. I may say that I know every monument in Europe as well as if I had seen it, and indeed very much better. I know the churches and palaces of Venice, which I have never yet visited, by heart, and I have even written so accurate a description of that city that people refuse to believe I have never set foot in it. The "beauties" of a city consist of over wide streets and squares, bordered with new and uniform houses. At least that is always what one is shown on such occasions.

The first thing that struck me here was the immense width of the streets, lined with pavements broad enough for a score of people to walk abreast on. The low height of the houses makes the great breadth of the streets the more noticeable; our Rue de la Paix would

be almost a lane here. Wooden pavement for the streets which has been tried but on a few yards with us, is generally adopted in London, where it stands admirably a traffic thrice as large and as busy as that of Paris. The wheels run on that pine flooring quietly and smoothly, as on a carpet, and the inhabitants are spared the deafening rattling of carriages on granite paving. It should be added, however, that in London the width of the pavements enables pedestrians to give up the roadway to horses and vehicles, thus preventing the numerous accidents to which the absence of noise would otherwise give rise. Such streets as are not paved with wood are macadamised.

So here I was, following streets at hap-hazard, and walking deliberately on like a man sure of his road. The shops were only just beginning to open. Paris rises earlier than London, which does not awake much before ten in the morning. On the other hand it goes to bed much later. Servants in bonnets, for women never leave off their bonnets, were washing and scouring the door-steps.

As the inhabitants are not yet up, let us take a look at the houses, and describe the nest before describing the birds. English houses have no carriage gateways;

very few have courtyards; they are separated from the pavement by a basement covered with bars or protected by a railing. At the bottom of this trench are placed the kitchens, pantries and other offices. Coal, bread, meat — carried in hollowed boards — in a word all the provisions are taken down that way without interfering with the comfort of the family. The stables are usually placed in separate buildings, not infrequently at quite a distance. Brick is the material generally employed in these buildings. English bricks are often of a yellowish ochre colour, false in tone, which, in my opinion, is not equal to the warm red tones of our bricks. Houses thus constructed have a sickly and unhealthy look most unpleasant to the eye. They are mainly of three stories, with two or three windows on the front, each dwelling being, as a general rule, inhabited by a single family. The window sashes are of the kind we call "guillotine." White stone steps, like a drawbridge spanning the trench in which are the kitchens and offices, connect the house and the street, and the door, painted in imitation oak, is generally adorned with a brass plate bearing the name and title of the owner. These are the characteristic features of a regular English house.

Besides the width of the streets and pavements and the low height of the houses, there is another thing which lends London a peculiar aspect; it is the black colour that uniformly covers everything. It is most gloomy and depressing, for it is not the dark, rich, weather-worn appearance that time adds to old buildings in more Southern countries, but an impalpable, subtile dust that clings to whatever it touches, that penetrates everywhere, and from which there is no escape. The enormous quantity of soft coal burned in London for the heating of houses and in manufactories, is one of the chief causes of the general mourning livery worn by buildings, some of the older of which look as though they had been painted over with blacking. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the statues; those of the Duke of Bedford, of the Duke of York on top of his column, and that of George III on horseback, resemble negroes or chimney-sweeps, so incrusted are they and so disfigured by that funeral quintessence of coal dust that falls from the London sky. Newgate prison, with its boss-work and its vermiculated stones, the old church of Saint Saviour's and a few Gothic chapels, the names of which have escaped my memory, appear to have been

built of black granite rather than to be darkened by time. Nowhere else have I seen that opaque, gloomy tint which lends to buildings, half veiled in mist, the air of great catafalques, and which would suffice to explain the traditional spleen of the English. As I looked upon these walls coloured by soot, I thought of the Alcazar and the Cathedral of Toledo, which the sun has clothed with a robe of purple and saffron.

The dome of Saint Paul's, a heavy imitation of Saint Peter's at Rome, and a building of the same genus as the Pantheon and the Escorial, with its hump-backed cupola and its two square belfries, suffers cruelly from the influence of the London atmosphere. In spite of all the efforts made to keep it white, it is always black, at least on one side. In vain is paint lavished upon it, the imperceptible coal dust sifted by the fog gets ahead of the house-painter's brush. St. Paul's is a further proof of the fact that the dome form belongs to the East, while the Northern heavens require to be cut up by the spires and high pitched gables of Gothic architecture.

The London sky, even when free from clouds, is of a milky blue in which whitishness prevails. It is of a markedly paler blue than the sky in France, and the

mornings and evenings are always bathed in mists and veiled in vapours. In the sunshine, London smokes like a heated horse or a steaming caldron, producing those wonderful effects of light in open spaces that English water-colour painters and engravers have so admirably rendered. Often, even in fine weather, it is difficult to see Southwark Bridge clearly from London Bridge, although they are quite close to each other. The smoke, spreading everywhere, softens harsh angles, conceals the poverty of the buildings, increases the perspective and imparts a peculiar mystery and distance to the most positive of objects. Thanks to it, the chimney shaft of a factory is easily turned into an obelisk, a wretched warehouse assumes the air of a Babylonian terrace, and a dull row of pillars is changed into a Palmyra portico. The symmetrical dulness of civilisation and the vulgarity of the forms it employs soften or disappear under that kindly veil.

Wine dealers, so common in Paris, are replaced in London by distillers of gin and other strong liquors. The gin palaces are very fine, they are adorned with brass work and gilding and painfully contrast by their splendour with the wretchedness of the class that frequents them. The doors are worn breast high by the

horny hands that are constantly pushing open their leaves. I saw entering one of these places a poor old woman who has remained in my memory like the remembrance of a nightmare.

I have closely studied Spanish wretchedness, and I have often been accosted by the witches that posed for Goya's "Caprices." I have stepped over, at night, the beggars that slept on the steps of the Granada theatre; I have given alms to Riberas and Murillos out of their frames, who were wrapped up in rags which, where they were not in holes, were stains; I have wandered through the dens of the Albaycin and followed the Monte Sagrado road, where the gypsies hollow out retreats for themselves in the rock and under the roots of the cacti and the fig-trees; but never have I seen anything more gloomy, more sad, more heart-sickening than that old woman entering the gin palace.

She wore a bonnet, the poor wretch, but what a bonnet! Never did trained donkey wear one more lamentable, more worn, more rumpled, more ragged, more bashed in, more piteously grotesque. The original colour of it had long become unrecognisable; I could not tell you whether it had been white or black, yellow or violet. To see her you would have thought she

was wearing a scoop or a coal shovel. On her poor old body hung rags that I can compare to nothing so well as to the lamentable torn vestments hung up above the bodies of the drowned that are exposed at the Morgue, but, sadder than in these cases, in this one the body was living and upright instead of being laid out. How different were these awful rags from the good Spanish rags, tawny, golden and picturesque that may be reproduced by a great painter and which are the glory of a school and of a literature. Between the English wretchedness, cold and icy as winter rain, and the careless, poetical Spanish poverty that, if it lack a cloak, wraps itself up in a sunbeam, and that, if it lack bread, puts out its hand and picks up an orange or a handful of those delicious sweet acorns that Sancho Panza delighted in!

A minute later the old woman came out of the gin shop, walking with her shoulders back like a soldier's; her earthy face had brightened up, a feverish red coloured her cheek bones, and a smile of idiotic happiness fluttered upon her faded lips. As she passed by me, she lifted up her eyes and cast on me a look that was dark, deep, fixed and yet devoid of thought. No doubt that is how the dead look when by chance some impious

hand draws back their eyelids that are never again to open save to behold God. Then her pupils became dim and the glance flickered out like a coal dipped in water. The strong gin was beginning to work, and she went on her way wagging her head with a stupid laugh. Blessed be thou, O gin, in spite of the declamations of philanthropists and temperance societies, for the moment of joy and repose thou bringest to the wretched. For such woes any remedy is legitimate, nor is the people mistaken in this. See how it hastens to drink the waters of Lethe under the name of gin. Strange art thou, O humanity, that insistest on the poor always preserving their reason in order that they may cease feeling the extent of their misery! You would do well, ye Englishmen, to send to Ireland the cargoes of opium with which you seek to poison the Chinese.

A little farther on I beheld a similar and no less depressing sight; an old white headed man, already drunk, was mouthing out some foolish song as he gestured wildly; his hat had fallen to the ground, but he was unable to pick it up, and he leaned to the best of his ability against a wall three or four feet high, topped with an iron railing.

The wall was that of a graveyard, for in London they still keep up cemeteries in the city. A church of the most lugubrious aspect and smoky like the chimney of a forge, rose amid blackened tombs, some of which had that vague human shape like that of bandaged and boxed mummies. The drunken old man singing within a couple of yards of these tombs presented a contrast most painful in its dissonance. Yet these two samples of the wretchedness of London were as nothing to what I was to behold later in Saint Giles', the Irish quarter, though they impressed me more deeply, the old man and the old woman being the first two living beings I came upon. It is true that the homeless rise early.

Meanwhile the streets were beginning to wake up; workmen, their white aprons tucked in their belts, were on their way to their work; the butchers' boys were carrying round the meat in wooden boards; the carriages went by at a lightning pace; the busses, brilliantly painted and varnished, and covered with gilded signs indicating their route, followed each other almost uninterruptedly, with the passengers sitting on top and the conductors standing on a board by the door; these busses travel at a good pace, for London is so

huge, so immense, that the need of speed is much more felt than in Paris. The activity of the locomotion contrasts strangely with the impassible air and the cold, phlegmatic physiognomy, to put it mildly, of the imperturbable pedestrians. The English walk fast, like the dead in the ballad, and yet their faces betray no desire to reach their destination. They run, yet do not seem to be in a hurry; they go straight ahead like a cannon ball, never turning if one knocks up against them, never apologising if they elbow anybody; the women themselves walk at a fast pace that would do honour to a storming party of grenadiers; their pace is the geometric virile gait which makes an Englishwoman recognisable all over the continent and which excites the laughter of the daintily stepping Parisian woman. Even the children go to school at a lively pace; idlers are unknown in London, although the *badaud* reappears as a cockney.

London extends over an immense extent of ground; the houses are not very high, the streets are very wide, the squares numerous and spacious. Saint James' Park, Hyde Park, Regent's Park cover vast spaces, so one must hasten else one would never reach one's destination before the next day.

The Thames is to London what the Boulevard is to Paris, the main line of traffic. Only on the Thames, steamers take the place of omnibuses. These steamers are long, narrow, and of shallow draft, much like the "Dorades" that used to ply between the Pont-Royal and Saint-Cloud. The trip costs sixpence, and one may go for that fare to Greenwich and Chelsea. There are stopping places near the bridges for the landing and embarking of passengers. Pleasant indeed are these short ten or fifteen minute trips, during which the picturesque banks of the river are unrolled before you as in a panorama. One can pass in this way under every bridge in London, and admire the three iron arches of Southwark Bridge, with their bold, wide span; the Ionic pillars which make Blackfriars' Bridge look so elegant; the Doric pillars, so robust and solid, of Waterloo Bridge, undoubtedly the handsomest in the world. As you descend below Waterloo Bridge you get a glimpse through the arches of Blackfriars' Bridge, of the gigantic mass of Saint Paul's, rising above an ocean of roofs, between the steeples of Saint Mary-le-Bone, Saint Benedict's and Saint Matthew's, with a part of the quay crowded with boats, ships, and stores. From

Westminster Bridge is seen the ancient abbey, whose two huge square towers, recalling those of Notre-Dame in Paris, and which have at each corner a pointed belfry, rise through the mist; the three quaintly traceried steeples of St. John the Evangelist's, to say nothing of the dentelations formed by the spires of distant churches, the great chimney stalks and the roofs of the houses. Vauxhall Bridge, the farthest up on this side, fitly closes the perspective. All these bridges, constructed of Portland stone or of Cornwall granite, have been built by private companies, for in London the Government does not interfere in any such matters, and the cost of construction is met by tolls. These tolls are collected, so far as pedestrians are concerned, in a really ingenious manner, each person passing through a turnstile and causing a wheel placed in the collecting office, to revolve one cog at a time. In that way the number of persons who have passed through the day is noted with certainty, and fraud on the part of the employees is rendered impossible.

You must forgive me if I keep on talking about the Thames, but the moving panorama it offers is so constantly new and grand that it is hard to get away from it. A forest of three-masters in the heart of a great

city is the finest spectacle the industry of man can offer to the eyes.

We shall, if you please, reach at once the heart of the rich quarters, pass from Waterloo Bridge, by Wellington Street, to the Strand, up the whole length of which we shall proceed. Starting from the pretty little church of Saint Mary's, so quaintly placed in the centre of the street, the Strand, which is enormously wide, is lined on either side with magnificent, sumptuous shops that, if they lack the dainty elegance of those of Paris, have an air of richness and luxurious abundance. Here are the show-windows of the print-sellers, in which one may admire the masterpieces of English engraving, so easy, so soft, so full of colour, and unfortunately applied to the worst drawings in the world, for, if English engravers are superior to the French in the mastery of their art, the French surpass them in perfection of drawing.

Queen Victoria's portrait is exhibited in every possible form in every shop-window; sometimes she wears her royal robes, her diamond crown and her regal mantle; sometimes she is simply dressed as a private lady, either alone or accompanied by Prince Albert; in one engraving they are represented side by side in a

tilbury, smiling away at each other in the most conjugal fashion. I think I am not guilty of exaggeration when I say that Queen Victoria's portrait is as common in England as Napoleon's in France. The young prince is also often represented, and in the toy shops are sold wax-peaches, called Windsor fruit, which, on being opened, show a baby, abundantly rouged and wrapped up in swaddling clothes, that claims to represent the Prince of Wales. I am bound to add that while the majority of portraits are improved, embellished, flattered, and lovingly caressed by a courtier engraver, there is no lack either of coarse drawings, worked off with the characteristic dash of English caricaturists, who treat Her Majesty in the most cavalier fashion.

Speaking of children's toys, I noticed how much more serious English toys are than ours. There were few drums, few trumpets, scarcely any Punches and soldiers, but, on the other hand, no end of steamships, sailing vessels, and railways with miniature engines and carriages, while the lantern slides, instead of representing the comical misadventures of Jocrisse or some such subject, formed a complete course of astronomy, a complete planetary system. There are also boxes

of architectural blocks, with which all manner of buildings may be constructed, and numerous other geometrical and physical pastimes that would not greatly delight Parisian children.

This talk of shops reminds me of a bit of advertising which our Paris charlatans will regret not having thought of. It is a question of mackintoshes, of waterproofs. In order to demonstrate triumphantly the waterproofing of his stuffs, the dealer has had the brilliant idea of nailing a part of one of his mackintoshes on a frame, so as to form a sort of basin. Into this he has poured about as much water as would hold in a basin, and in it dart and swim a dozen gold-fish. To turn an overcoat into a fishpond and to enable lovers of the gentle craft to fish in the skirt of their waterproof, is assuredly the very acme of advertising, the highest effort of charlatanism.

Proceeding towards Charing Cross, you see, at the corner of Trafalgar Square, the façade of Northumberland House, easily known by a great lion whose tail sticking straight out is of mediocre effect, artistically speaking, although it is unquestionably novel. It is the lion of the Percys, and never did heraldic lion take such advantage of the right to assume a fabulous form.

The marble staircase leading to the apartments is highly admired, as well as the collection of pictures, which consists, like all picture galleries, of paintings by Raphael, Titian, Paolo Veronese, Rubens, Albrecht Dürer, Van Dyck, besides Domenico Feti, Francia, Tempesta, Salvator Rosa, &c. I do not wish to cast doubts upon the gallery of the Duke of Northumberland, not having seen it, but I think that one cannot place much reliance upon the genuineness of the paintings by old masters which are to be found in England. Although most of them have been purchased for very large sums, they are in general nothing more than copies. The number of Murillos I saw being manufactured for the English market in Seville makes me suspect the Raphaels they own; their Van Dycks and Holbeins are far more authentic; they are portraits of lords or ladies and of high personages, painted on the spot, that have remained in the families as heirlooms, and the history of which is perfectly well known. What I say need trouble no one; those who fancy they possess a Raphael or a Titian, and who in reality have nothing more than seven or eight layers of oil colours in a handsome frame, need not be any the less happy; faith saves.

A monument to the memory of Nelson is being erected in the centre of Trafalgar Square, and until it is finished the hoarding around the space for the monument is covered with huge posters and monster bills, the letters of which are six feet high and of the most extraordinary shapes. This is the spot for the advertising of phenomena, unusual shows and dramatic performances.

Really the English overdo Waterloo and Trafalgar. I know very well that we ourselves are not free from the mania of adorning our streets and bridges with the names of our victories, but our repertory is at least a little more varied.

Regent Street, which is arcaded like the Rue de Rivoli, Piccadilly, Pall Mall, the Haymarket and the Opera, which may best be compared to the Odéon in Paris, Carlton Place and Saint James' Park, and the Queen's Palace, with its triumphal arch in imitation of that of the Carroussel, make this part of London one of the most splendid of the city.

The architecture of the houses, or rather of the palaces which form this quarter, inhabited by the wealthy, is quite grandiose and monumental, although the composition is hybrid and often equivocal. Never,

even in a city of antiquity, were so many pillars and pediments seen together. The Greeks and the Romans were assuredly not as Greek and Roman as Her Majesty's subjects. One walks between two rows of Parthenons, which is very flattering; there are nothing but temples of Vesta and Jupiter to be seen and the illusion would be complete did not one read in the spaces between the pillars inscriptions such as the following: *Gas Company. Life Insurance Company.* The Ionic order is well thought of; the Doric even more so, but the Paestumian pillar enjoys a marvellous popularity; it is stuck everywhere, like the nutmeg Boileau speaks of. At first glance these colonnades and pediments have quite a splendid aspect, but all this magnificence is for the most part of mastic or Roman cement, stone being rare in London. It is particularly in the newly built churches that English architectural genius has exhibited the quaintest cosmopolitanism and most strangely confused the various styles. Upon an Egyptian pylon rises a Greek order mixed with Roman arches, and over all is placed a Gothic spire. The meanest Italian peasant would shrug his shoulders with pity at the sight. Yet all modern buildings, with very few exceptions, are in this style.

A DAY IN LONDON

The English are rich, active, industrious; they know how to forge iron, to master steam, to twist matter into every shape, to invent machines of terrific power: they may even have great poets; but they will always lack art, properly speaking; form in itself escapes them. They feel this, they are annoyed at it, their national self-love is hurt by it. They know that at bottom and in spite of their marvellous material civilisation, they are nothing but barbarians veneered over. Lord Elgin, so violently anathematised by Byron, committed a useless piece of sacrilege; the *bassi-relievi* he brought to London will inspire no one. The gift of plastics has been denied to the peoples of the North; the sun, that brings objects out in relief, strengthens contours and restores to each thing its true form, illumines these countries with too oblique rays which the leaden light of gas cannot make up for. Then the English are not Roman Catholics. Protestantism is a religion as fatal to art as Islamism, and perhaps even more so. Artists must be either Roman Catholics or pagans. In a country where temples are nothing but great square rooms, devoid of pictures, ornaments, and statues, where periwigged gentlemen speak seriously, and with a wealth of Biblical allusions

of Papistical idols and the Scarlet Woman of Babylon, art can never rise very high, for the noblest aim of sculptor and painter alike is to fix in marble or on canvas the divine symbols of the religion prevailing in his country and in his day. Phidias carved Venus, Raphael painted the Madonna, but neither of them was an Anglican. London may become a new Rome, but assuredly it will never be a new Athens, a position that seems to be reserved for Paris. In London, there is gold, power, material development carried to the highest degree, a gigantic exaggeration of whatever may be done with money, patience and will; there is the useful and the comfortable, but neither beauty nor the agreeable. In Paris, we have grace, flexibility, delicacy, an easy understanding of harmony and beauty, in a word, Greek qualities. The English will excel in everything which it is possible to do and particularly in what is impossible. They will establish a Bible Society in Pekin, and will get to Timbuctoo in white kid gloves and patent leather boots, in a state of complete "respectability." They will invent machines capable of turning out six hundred thousand pairs of stockings in one minute, and they will even discover new countries in which they may dispose of their

stockings, but they will never make a bonnet that a Parisian shop-girl would consent to wear. If taste could be bought, they would pay a high price for it; fortunately God has reserved to himself two or three little things which all the gold of the great of the earth cannot buy — genius, beauty, and happiness.

Nevertheless, in spite of these criticisms, which apply to details, the general aspect of London has something about it that amazes and fills one with stupor. It is in very truth a capital in the civilised meaning. Everything is grand, splendid, and arranged according to the latest improvements. The streets are too wide, too great, too well lighted; the care for material facilities is carried to the utmost point. In this respect Paris is at least a hundred years behind London, and up to a certain point its mode of construction prevents its ever equalling the English capital. English houses are very lightly built, for the ground on which they are constructed does not belong to the owner of the building. The whole of the ground on which the city stands is owned, as in the Middle Ages, by a very small number of noblemen and millionaires who grant permission to build in return for a stated payment. This permission covers a certain period of

time, and the house is built to last about as long. This reason, joined to the fragility of the materials employed, is the cause that London is renewed every thirty years and allows of the progress of civilisation, as the cant phrase goes, to be kept up with. Then the Great Fire of 1666 made a clean sweep, much to my regret, for I am not very fond of modern architectural genius and I greatly prefer the picturesque to the comfortable.

The English genius is naturally methodical; in the streets every one keeps to the right as a matter of course; there are thus formed regular streams of people going the one in one direction the other in the other. A handful of soldiers is enough for London, and even they have no police duties to perform. I do not remember seeing a single guard-room. Policemen, with a number on their hats and a strap on their cuff to show they are on duty, walk about quietly and philosophically, bearing no other arms than a baton less than twenty-four inches in length, and thus traverse the most densely populated quarters. In case of need they call each other by means of a wooden rattle. The vast traffic, the terrifying movement that gives one the vertigo, is so to speak, left to itself, and thanks

to the common sense of the crowd, accidents do not happen.

The people look more wretched than the lower classes in Paris. With us, working men, and people of the lower classes have clothes made for them; they are coarse, it is true, but of a particular cut, so that it is plain they have always owned them. If their jacket happens to be torn, one understands that they have worn it since it was new. The shop girls and working girls are fresh and clean, though very simply dressed. But it is not so in London; there every one wears a dress coat, trousers with straps, *qui facit ille facit*, — even the poor devil who opens the door of a cab. The women all wear a *lady's* bonnet and gown so that at the first glance they look like people of a higher walk in life who have come to grief through misconduct or misfortune. The reason of this is that the lower classes in London wear second-hand clothes, and by a series of successive degradations, the gentleman's dress coat finally adorns the person of a sewer cleaner, and the duchess' satin bonnet is stuck on some wretched servant's head. Even in Saint Giles', that dreadful Irish quarter which surpasses anything one can imagine in the way of dirt and filth, are seen silk

hats and black coats, the latter usually worn without a shirt and buttoned over the bare buff that shows through the tears. Yet Saint Giles is but two steps from Oxford street and Piccadilly.

Nor are those contrasts diminished by the least gradation; there is no transition between the most splendid luxury and the most appalling poverty. Carriages do not enter these rutty lanes, full of puddles of water in which swarm ragged children and where tall slips of girls with dishevelled hair, bare footed and bare legged, with a wretched rag scarce sufficient to cross on the bosom, look at you with a haggard, fierce glance. What suffering and famine are to be read on those thin, sallow, gray, bumpy faces reddened by the cold! There are poor devils there who have been hungry from the day they were weaned. These people live on steamed potatoes and rarely know the taste of bread. By dint of privation the blood of these miserable wretches becomes thinner and thinner, and from red turns yellow, as has been proved by the reports of medical men.

There are on the lodging-houses in Saint Giles' inscriptions that run thus — *Furnished cellar for a single gentleman.* That is enough to give you an idea of the

place. I was curious enough to enter one of these cellars, and I assure you I never saw any place so little furnished. It seems incredible that human beings can live in such dens, yet it is true that they die there in thousands.

That is the seamy side of every civilisation; monstrous fortunes mean frightful poverty. In order that a few may devour so much, many more must go fasting; the loftier the palace, the deeper the quarry, and nowhere is the disproportion more marked than in England. To be poor in London strikes me as one of the tortures Dante forgot to include in his spiral of woes. It is so plain that the possession of wealth is the only recognised merit, that the poor English despise themselves and humbly put up with the arrogance and contempt of those in easy or rich circumstances. The English, who talk so much of Papistic idols, ought not to forget that the golden calf is the vilest of idols and the one that calls for the most sacrifices.

Happily the fetidity of these loathsome places is corrected by the squares, which are very numerous. The Place Royale in Paris best conveys the idea of an English square, which is a place bordered by houses of uniform design, and having in the centre a garden

planted with tall trees, enclosed by railings; the emerald green sward of these spaces pleasantly rests the eyes wearied by the sombre tints of the sky and the buildings. These squares are often connected and cover a vast extent of ground. Magnificent ones have just been erected near Hyde Park, and are intended for the nobility. No shop, no store troubles the aristocratic peace of these elegant Thebaids. It is greatly to be wished that the use of squares should become general in Paris, where the houses tend to crowd more and more together, and from which vegetation and verdure will end by disappearing completely. There is nothing so pleasant as these vast, quiet, cool and green enclosures. It is true that I never saw any one walking about in these attractive gardens, to which each tenant has a key; they are satisfied with preventing other people from entering them.

The squares and the parks are one of the great charms of London. Saint James' Park, close to Pall Mall is a delightful place to stroll in. It is reached by a huge staircase, worthy of Babylon itself, at the foot of the Duke of York's column. The walk along the Egyptian colonnade of Carlton Place is very wide and very handsome. But what I especially liked about it,

is the great pond filled with herons, ducks and other water-birds. The English excel in giving to made gardens a romantic and natural look. Westminster, the towers of which rise above the tree tops, admirably closes the prospect on the river side.

Hyde Park, where parade the fashionable horses and equipages, has something quite rural and country like, thanks to the extent of the waters and of the greens. It is not a garden but a landscape. The statue voted by the ladies of London to the Duke of Wellington, is in Hyde Park. The noble Duke has been idealised and deified under the figure of Achilles. I do not believe it is possible to carry grotesqueness and ridiculousness farther; to place upon the torso of the valiant son of Peleus and the muscular neck of the conqueror of Hector the noble Duke's British head, with its hooked nose, its flat mouth and its square chin, is one of the most comical ideas that ever entered a human brain. It is artless, involuntary and therefore irresistible caricature. The statue, cast in bronze by Westmacott, out of the metal of the guns taken at the battles of Vitoria, Salamanca, Tolosa and Waterloo, is no less than eighteen feet high. The corrective to this apotheosis is to be found alongside of it. Thanks

to one of those ironical antitheses due to chance, the great jester at human affairs, the noble Duke's mansion, Apsley House, stands on the corner of Piccadilly, and from his window he can look every morning upon the bronze counterfeit presentment of himself as Achilles, which is a very pleasant sort of an awakening. Unfortunately Lord Wellington's popularity in England is somewhat doubtful, and as the rabble knows no keener delight than to smash with stones, and sometimes with gunshots, the windows of Achilles, all the sashes in Apsley House are grated and protected by iron lined shutters. It is the gemoniae by the side of the Pantheon; the Tarpeian Rock close by the Capitol.

Hyde Park is lined with charming houses in the real English style, adorned with glazed galleries, green shutters, and projecting pavilions that recall Gothic turrets and produce an excellent effect.

One is surprised to see such vast open spaces in a city like London. Regent's Park, in which are the Zoölogical Gardens and which is bordered by buildings in the style of the Garde-Meuble and the Ministry of Marine in Paris, is absolutely enormous, and one can easily lose one's way in it. The most picturesque

effects have been obtained, thanks to the skilful handling of the undulation of the ground.

That is about what I saw on my walk through London; it is of course very incomplete, but I should need volumes and not a single letter, did I attempt to describe London fully. You may desire to know, however, my opinion of English cookery and to be told what the English eat and drink, these matters being usually passed over in silence by writers of travel who are taken up with quarrelling over the exact measurements of some pillar or obelisk that no one cares a pin for. For my part, as I do not belong to that exalted class, I shall confess that the question is a serious one, — as serious as the Eastern question. The English claim that they possess the secret of healthy, substantial, and abundant food. That food consists mainly of turtle soup, beefsteak, rumpsteak, fish, vegetables boiled in water, ham, beef, rhubarb tarts, and other similar primitive dishes. It is quite true that all this food is absolutely natural and is cooked without any sauce or relish, but it is not eaten in the condition in which it is served. The seasoning of the dishes is done at table, according to each person's taste. Six or eight small flagons placed on the table on a silver

salver, and containing anchovy sauce, cayenne pepper, Harvey's fish sauce, and a number of East Indian ingredients that blister the throat, turn these dishes so simply dressed into something more violent than the spiciest of ragouts. I have eaten without a wink fried pimento and preserved ginger, but these things were as honey and sugar by the side of English dishes. Porter and Scotch ale, which I am very fond of, are quite unlike our French beers, and unlike the Belgian beers too, which are themselves superior to our own. Porter will burn like brandy, and Scotch ale intoxicates like champagne. The wines drunk in England, sherry and port, are merely rum more or less disguised. Under the name of champagne there is also drunk a large quantity of Devonshire cider. At dessert there is put on, along with the Cheshire cheese and the dry biscuits, celery very neatly served in crystal cups. The oranges, which are brought from Portugal, are excellent and very cheap. Indeed they are the only cheap thing in London.

I dined at the Hotel Brunswick, near the East India docks, and close to the Thames. The ships passed up and down in front of the windows and almost seemed to be coming into the room. I was served,

among other things, with a rumpsteak of such size, surrounded by so many potatoes and so much cauliflower, and covered with such abundance of oyster sauce, that there would have been enough to satisfy four people. I was also taken to a table d'hôte in a tavern near the Fish Market at Billingsgate, where I ate exquisitely fresh turbot, soles, and salmon. At the beginning of the meal the landlord asked the blessing, and at the close returned thanks after having knocked on the table with his knife to call the company to attention.

The cafés, or coffee-rooms, are utterly unlike French cafés, and are rather gloomy rooms, divided into small boxes; they altogether lack the brightness of our Parisian cafés, brilliant with gilding, mouldings, and mirrors. Indeed, mirrors are not often met with in England, and those I saw were very small.

There are also in every part of the city fish-houses where people go to eat oysters, prawns, and lobsters at night after the theatre. As these taverns are not licensed for the sale of beer and spirits, you have to give the money to the waiter, who goes out, as required, to purchase the drink you wish.

As for the theatres, I saw only the Italian Opera and the Théâtre-Français. It would be absurd to talk

to you of the latter, and so I shall say a few words of the former.

The hall is quite as large as that of our own Opera in the Rue Lepelletier, but in order to accommodate the spectators the stage has been made to suffer. The spectators invade the stage, there being three rows of proscenium boxes between the footlights and the curtain, producing a curious effect. The supernumeraries, the members of the chorus, may not come farther forward than the first wings, in order not to prevent the young gentlemen in the lower proscenium boxes from seeing the stage. The leading singers alone stand out on the proscenium and play outside the framework of the stage setting, much as if they were figures cut out of a picture and placed some six feet in front of the background against which they are to show. When at the end of an act, in consequence of some tragical event, the hero or the heroine is stabbed and dies near the footlights, he or she has to be taken under the arms and dragged backwards up the stage, so as not to be separated from the mourning suite by the fall of the curtain.

The boxes are upholstered in red damask, and are consequently somewhat dark. The hall itself is not

very well lighted, the whole blaze of light being reserved for the stage; this arrangement, combined with the powerful foot, top, and side lights, enable absolutely magical effects to be produced. The sunrise which ends the ballet of "Giselle" produces a perfect illusion and does honour to Mr. Greave's skill. Along with "Giselle" was given an opera by Donizetti, "Gemma de Vergy," imitated, as far as the libretto goes, from Dumas' "Charles VII and his Great Vassals," and as regards the music, from Donizetti himself, and also Bellini and Rossini. Gualti, the tenor, and Mlle. Adelaide Moltini, of Milan, managed to win applause in it, but the lady's shoulders accounted for quite half the demonstration.

Although the swells had not yet arrived, I saw at the Opera lovely female faces, beautifully set off by the red damask of the boxes. Keepsakes are truer than one is apt to think them, and they do reproduce very faithfully the mannered grace and the frail, elegant forms of the women of the aristocracy. These do have eyes with long lashes and moist glances, curls of golden hair that caress white shoulders and snowy bosoms generously exposed to the view, — a fashion which strikes me as contrasting rather strongly with Eng-

lish prudery. Bright colours appear to be preferred. In the same box there were shining, like the solar spectrum, three ladies dressed, the one in yellow, the second in scarlet, and the third in sky-blue. Nor are the head-dresses in very good taste. Every one knows how many things Englishwomen stick on their heads: gold fringes, coral branches, twigs of trees, shells, oyster beds; their fancy is startled at nothing, especially when they have reached "a certain age," as it is called.

And now that is about all that may be seen while traversing London as goes his nose, a worthy dreamer who does not know a word of English, who is no great admirer of blackened stones, and who thinks any street that happens to open up before him as attractive as the Great Exhibition.

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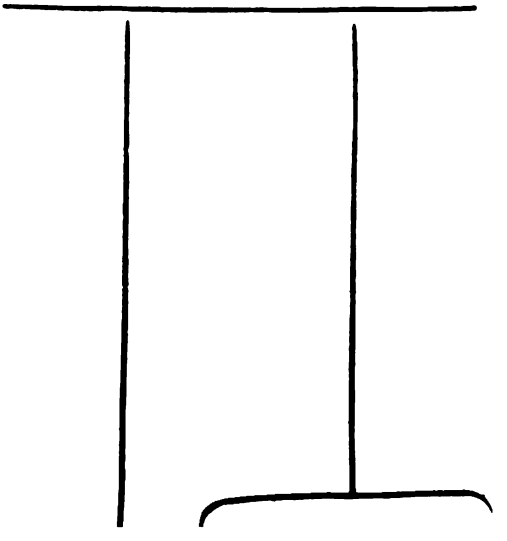
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